Fujiko Kosumi
SAMURAI
DRIVE
2

SAMURAI DRIVE 2
FUJIKO KOSUMI

BOOK 2
AUTUMN STORM

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#5: LONG AUTUMN RAIN

Samurai Drive

CHARACTER PROFILES

FRESHMAN AND TRANSFER STUDENT. SHISEIKAN HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS 1-1. CALLS HIMSELF "HARUMA'S COMRADE." ORIGINALLY FROM SHIGA PREFECTURE, HIS RESPECT FOR SEISHIRO DREW HIM TO TOKYO. HE LIVES IN THE SCHOOL DORMS AND WORKS PART-TIME TO PAY FOR HIS TUITION.

A WEASEL THAT'S TAKEN UP RESIDENCE AT SHISEIKAN. HARUMA TENDED TO HER WOUNDS, AND NOW SHE'S IN LOVE WITH HIM.

THE PROTAGONIST. FRESHMAN (10TH GRADE), SHISEIKAN HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS 1-1. HE IS RUMORED TO BE THE STRONGEST SWORDSMAN IN HIS YEAR. THE MONSTROUS STRENGTH HE DISPLAYED DURING HIS SEARCH FOR HIS TEACHER'S KILLER SOON WON HIM THE NICKNAME "WHITE DAEMON." THAT SAID, HE'S CHRONICALLY SLEEPY AND IS A GUY OF FEW (ALMOST NO) WORDS, SO IT'S GENERALLY HARD TO TELL HE'S EVEN THERE AT ALL. THANKS TO IBUKI, HE'S STARTING TO SEEM A BIT MORE NORMAL.

HARUMA'S CLASSMATE. HE'S GENTLE AND COOL-HEADED, BUT DEEP DOWN, HE'S A PASSIONATE YOUNG MAN. A HUGE JIN FAN. REN'S THE FRIEND HE JUST CAN'T SEEM TO GET RID OF.

HARUMA'S CLASSMATE. IMPULSIVE, PASSIONATE AND SENTIMENTAL. HE'S ACTUALLY A WIMP. IN THE PAST HE GOT BEATEN HOLLOW BY HARUMA.

HARUMA'S CLASSMATE. PEOPLE CALL HIM THE "FOUR-EYED DETECTIVE," AND HE MAY HAVE TIES TO A MYSTERIOUS ORGANIZATION CALLED THE "HAJIME KANEDA DETECTIVE GROUP."

A MYSTERIOUS SWORDSMAN THAT HARASSED HARUMA. NOT MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT HIM AT THIS POINT, BUT FROM THE WAY HE TALKS, IT'S QUITE OBVIOUS HE'S A WEIRDO.

A SECOND-YEAR STUDENT AT SHISEIKAN. HE ENJOYS FLOWER ARRANGING AND TEA CEREMONIES. JIN'S QUIET, COURTEOUS PARTNER. HIS SKILL IS SAID TO BE SECOND BEST AMONG THE SOPHOMORES. HE'S RESOLVED TO DEVOTE HIS LIFE TO JIN.

A SECOND-YEAR STUDENT AT SHISEIKAN, AND THE SCHOOL'S STRONGEST SWORDSMAN. HE AND HARUMA WERE BOTH SEISHIRO'S DISCIPLES.
HE DOTES ON HARUMA AND LOOKS OUT FOR HIM, BUT IT BUGS THE HECK OUT OF HARUMA.

A GIFTED SWORDSMAN WHO WAS MURDERED TWO YEARS AGO AT THE AGE OF 23. HARUMA'S TEACHER. JUST BEFORE HE DIED, HE KILLED INNOCENT CIVILIANS. AN ACT WHICH DESTROYED HIS REPUTATION AFTER HIS DEATH.

SEISHIRO'S LITTLE SISTER (AGE 14). A BRAVE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT WHO GUARDS THE DOJO HER LATE PARENTS AND BROTHER LEFT HER.

HARUMA'S OLDER BROTHER (AGE 27). HIS FATHER IS A RADICAL SWORD ABOLITIONIST, AND HE ACTS AS HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, PROVIDING SUPPORT BEHIND THE SCENES. SINCE HIS BROTHER HARUMA IS STILL DEVOTED TO SEISHIRO, HE'S ON BAD TERMS WITH HIM.

A KOKONOE FAMILY SERVANT WHO DOTES ON HARUMA. AN ECCENTRIC AND FORMER STREET GANG MEMBER WHO WEARS A MAID OUTFIT FOR FUN.

STORY OUTLINE

AFTER THE MEIJI RESTORATION, THE MEIJI GOVERNMENT ALLOWED THE SAMURAI TO CONTINUE TO BEAR SWORDS. FAST-FORWARD TO THE PRESENT, WHERE THE DISTINGUISHED ALL-BOYS SCHOOL "SHISEIKAN" STANDS QUIETLY IN TOKYO'S SHIBUYA WARD. ONE OF THE LAST REMAINING SCHOOLS OF SWORDSMANSHIP, IT ATTRACTS THE SONS OF THE SWORD-BEARING CLASS. HARUMA KOKONOE, A SHINSEIKAN FRESHMAN AND FORMER STUDENT OF SEISHIRO SHINDO, SPENT HIS DAYS PROWLING THE STREETS, LOOKING FOR THE SWORDSMAN WHO KILLED HIS TEACHER. ALTHOUGH HE HADN'T SEEN THE NEED FOR FRIENDS, AN ENCOUNTER WITH IBUKI TAKAHARA, THE TRANSFER STUDENT, CAUSED HIM TO GRADUALLY BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP. ON THE OTHER HAND, BECAUSE HE WAS AN AWKWARD PERSON WHO COULDN'T ACKNOWLEDGE TWO "IMPORTANT THINGS" IN HIS MIND, HE FELT THAT FRIENDS WOULD DO NOTHING BUT HAMPER HIS SEARCH. ONE DAY, SOMEONE STOLE THE SWORD "KOUYA," WHICH SEISHIRO HAD LEFT HIM. UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE HELP OF IBUKI AND HIS CLASSMATES, HARUMA WAS VACILLATING OVER WHAT TO DO WHEN THE OBVIOUSLY STRANGE SENSYU SUGATANI APPEARED BEFORE HIM...

SAMURAI DRIVE

SACRIFICE...?
I HOPE YOU...
...CONTINUE TO SHINE...
...EVEN IF YOU MUST SACRIFICE SOMETHING.
SACRIFICE?

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS 1
QUESTION: WHICH IS THE PROTAGONIST, HARUMA OR IBUKI?
ANSWER. HARUMA'S THE PROTAGONIST
A. W春人は…zzzzz 晴馬です。
SMACK
ぐぅ
IF I DIDN'T TALK...
...THIS GUY WOULD SAY MAYBE 10 LINES PER CHAPTER!
...WHICH JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW MUCH OF THE TALKING IBUKI DOES.
THIS MUCH BECAUSE I WANT TO
LOOK I DON'T TALK...

NO DESIRES.
NO ATTACH-MENTS.
APATHETIC.
??
I REALLY...
...DON'T GET IT.
?
"SACRIFICE" WOULD HAVE TO BE SOMETHING BIG, RIGHT...?
HOW SAD. HARUMA KOKONOE REALLY HAS NO IDEA!
SACRIFICE WHAT?
I'VE GOT NOTHING.
GRRT
...WHEN SOMEONE TOOK IT ALL AWAY FROM ME.
NOT SINCE THAT DAY TWO YEARS AGO...

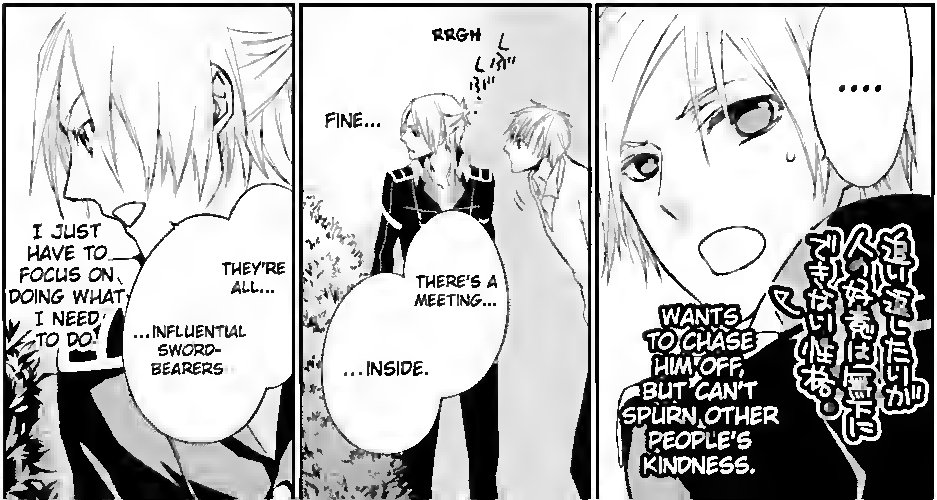
WHY DID I THINK OF TAKAHARA?
OF ALL THINGS...
WHAT DO I HAVE ...?
POOF
ぽふ
A WOLF WITH HIS FANGS RIPPED OUT...
I HAD THE SWORD TAKEN FROM ME...
I'M THE IDIOT.
SENSYU SUGATANI...
HE MIGHT HAVE HAD IT RIGHT.
NO.
LOOK AROUND AT YOUR OWN SITUATION MORE.
...SAID SOMETHING WEIRD.
IT'S BECAUSE THAT IDIOT JIN.
RIGHT NOW THERE'S MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED.
I FEEL LIKE A TRAITOR...
IT MAKES ME LOSE MY FOCUS.
THAT "SOMETHING" I FELT IN TAKAHARA AND THE OTHERS...

KRRT
SMAK
I HAVE NOTHING.
ALL THAT'S IMPORTANT IS SEISHIRO...
...AND FINDING HIS KILLER.
THIS IS NO TIME TO HESITATE...
...BECAUSE OTHER THINGS ARE DISTRACTING ME.
DON'T DROP YOUR GUARD...

JUST MOVE!
ON YOUR OWN!
SHUF
A MEETING OF SWORD-BEARERS!
STAKEOUT
INSTANT
RESTAURANT KIN-
I'LL LIE IN WAIT FOR THEM...
RSSL ガサ
...AND RIGHT WHEN THEY COME OUT...
WOW!
AN EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT, HUH? YEP, LOOKS LIKE A CLANDESTINE MEETING TO ME!

TAKAHARA ...
WHY ARE YOU HERE...?
DON'T BE SUCH A STRANGER, KOKONOE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE ALONE?
?!
WELL, I'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA.
WHAT? YOU'RE SERIOUSLY ASKING ME THAT?
ALWAYS TOGETHER!
10
いつでも共に
....
TRANSLATION: I JUST FOLLOWED YOU WITHOUT ASKING.
IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE COMRADES!
SNAPP
HMPH
....
HEY!
SAY SOMETHING!
This is embarrassing!
MMBLE
MY PLAN IS RUINED.
JUST...
....
YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN DO YOUR WHITE DAEMON STUFF WITH NO SWORD, AGAINST OTHER SWORD-BEARERS?
BUT DON'T FORGET, KOKONOE. YOU'RE UNARMED RIGHT NOW.
仇探しの二人
HUNTING FOR THE MURDERER.
LOOK, I'M SORRY I CRASHED
YOUR PLAN WITHOUT PERMISSION.

...LEAN ON YOUR FRIENDS A BIT, AT LEAST DURING TIMES LIKE THIS.
THAT'S ...
...WHAT I THOUGHT, SO... HERE I AM.
一人が好きなのも知ってるけどよ
I-KNOW YOU LIKE BEING ALONE AND ALL, BUT...
HAH
はっ
NO!
NO!
GUARD!
ばす
BOOMF
BOOMF
GET IT TOGETHER HEART!
ドキドキしまくりおんの心!!
SO WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?
DROPPING!
PEEK
きょろ


....
WANTS TO CHASE HIM OFF, BUT CAN'T SPURN OTHER PEOPLE'S KINDNESS.
RRGH
FINE...
THERE'S A MEETING...
...INSIDE.
I JUST HAVE TO FOCUS ON DOING WHAT I NEED TO DO!
THEY'RE ALL...
...INFLUENTIAL SWORD-BEARERS

THE SWORD-BEARING CLASS IS ENDANGERED IN THE MODERN AGE.
BUT IT'S ALSO MAKING HEADLINES IN ANOTHER WAY, ISN'T IT? PEOPLE SAY THE RADICALS ARE GOING OUT OF CONTROL.
YEAH, I KNOW ABOUT IT. IT AFFECTS US DIRECTLY.
THEY MAY JUST KEEP CHIPPING AWAY AT US LIKE THAT
HUH? OH, THE ONE ABOUT THE SWORD-BEARING PRIVILEGE THAT EVERYONE'S DEBATING RIGHT NOW?
STRIPPING THE SWORD-BEARING PRIVILEGE FROM INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE AGE OF 15.
TODAY'S NEWS
ANOTHER STEP TOWARD ABOLISHMENT
UH-HUH
HUH. SO WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THEM?
THE ONE IN THE NEWS...
SUBMITTED A BILL
BECAUSE OF THAT IMAGE...
IN PARTICULAR, A FEW RADICAL SWORD-BEARERS
USE THEIR POWER MERCILESSLY AND HURT OTHERS
SWORD-BEARING PRIVILEGE
(DESCENDANTS OF SAMURAI)
REGULAR PEOPLE
一般人
HARUMA, ETC
YUKINARI, HARUMA'S FATHER, ETC
EVEN THIS GROUP HAS BOTH SWORD-BEARING SUPPORTERS AND ABOLITIONISTS
BUT THE REASON SOCIETY FEARS US...
...IS THAT WE HOLD AN ABSOLUTE POWER CALLED THE SWORD.
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE ALL LIKE THAT.
AT THIS RATE, WE'LL GO EXTINCT.
UNFORTUNATELY..
...SWORD-BEARERS ARE GENERALLY THE TARGET OF COLD, DUBIOUS LOOKS.

I HEARD SOME ABOLITIONISTS GOT SLASHED BY RADICAL SWORD-BEARERS THE OTHER DAY.
THE ONES IN THERE NOW ARE RADICALS.
WHAT?!
WHAAAAAT?!
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, AMBUSHING THOSE BIG NAMES?!
?
I WAS GOING TO INTERROGATE THEM ABOUT SEISHIRO'S DEATH DIRECTLY.
They must have useful info.
SOMEONE STOP THIS IDIOT!
DON'T THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY!
NO, MAN, NO!
THEY'RE INFLUENTIAL.
SWORD-BEARERS, AND RADICALS! UNDERSTAND?!
WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO YOU?!
IF IT DOES I'D RATHER THE RADICALS DID IT.
?!

悪人には
EVILDOERS
容赦いらない
DESERVE NO MERCY.
IF THEY'RE BAD GUYS...
...IF THINGS GET UGLY, I CAN JUST KILL 'EM.
OH, I SEE!
...AS IF I'D REALLY SAY THAT, YOU MORON!!
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT DANGEROUS INFORMATION ANYWAY?!
MY FATHER.
YOU STOLE IT?!
MFFF
SHH!
PSST
YOU'RE PRETTY SLY!
AN ABOLITIONIST FROM A DISTINGUISHED FAMILY WITH LOTS OF INSIDE INFORMATION!

PLEASE...
EXCUSE ME!
RSSLE
WAIT!
THAT'S THEM.
HOLD IT! DON'T BE HASTY!
LET'S GO.
...LISTEN TO ME!
...?
AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE...
...YOUNG LADY?
PLEASE READ THIS.
PETITION
I AM AN ABOLITIONIST. I'M NOT PART OF THE SWORD-BEARING CLASS.

MY LITTLE BROTHER
...WAS KILLED BY A SWORD-BEARER.
WHEN MY FATHER THREW HIMSELF INTO THE ABOLISHMENT MOVEMENT, HE WAS ALSO...
...YOU CAME TO TELL US THAT?
YOU'RE SHAKING IN YOUR SHOES, AND YOU STILL CAME?
P-PLEASE...
THINK ABOUT IT. SWORDS CREATE NOTHING BUT MISFORTUNE
PLEASE UNDERSTAND
PLEASE..
HEH
RSSLE
SKSSSH

!
SHUF
ZIPP
HEY!
KOKONOE!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
SACRIFICES MUST BE MADE.
WE'LL PURGE THE WEAK AND CORRUPT THE ABOLITIONISTS
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR AMBITION, THIS MUST BE DONE.
THERE HAS TO BE...
...SOMETHING!
YOU'RE UNARMED!
OUR COUNTRY WAS STRONG ONCE. WE INTEND TO MAKE IT STRONG AGAIN, BRING BACK THE WORLD OF SWORDSMEN.

THWAP
RRGH!
FWSSH
BWAH!
WHO ARE YOU?!
KLNNG

KREAK
EVERYBODY OKAY?
TAKAHARA...
DE...
DE? HUH?
WHAAA-AAAAA
DEAL WITH THEM.
AAAA-AAA?!
DA

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
TH...
THANK YOU...
VERY MUCH...
....
SNAP
SORRY...
HUH?
YOUR UMBRELLA
OH, IT'S OKAY! ...UM, SIR. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
ARE YOU OKAY?
ARE YOU...
...HURT?
NO... TH-THANK YOU.
YOU'RE TOO KIND.
COMPARED TO YOU...
...SWORD-BEARERS ARE...
GRRT

...I'M SORRY.
EH?
WHY ARE YOU APOLOGIZING?! YOU'RE AN ABOLITIONIST TOO, AREN'T YOU?!
THEY SHOW OFF THEIR SWORDS AND COMMIT ATROCITIES.
THEY LAUGH AT PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO POWER.
I DON'T HAVE IT NOW...
BUT...
...I'M ALSO A SWORD-BEARER.
GRR
GET AWAY FROM ME!
SMAKK

YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!
YOU SWORDSMEN ARE ALL THE SAME!
NO MATTER WHAT MASK YOU WEAR, THERE'S ALWAYS A BRUTAL SMILE BEHIND IT!
JUST LIKE SEISHIRO SHINDO! HE PRETENDED TO BE A SAINT...
BUT HE WAS NOTHING BUT A MURDERER!

DON'T YOU DARE...
...TALK ABOUT SEISHIRO LIKE THAT!
I KNEW IT!
...EYES. YOUR ...
EEK
....
THEY'RE THE EYES OF A MURDEROUS SWORDSMAN!
HAH
YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT FROM THOSE MEN!

HIYA
TAKAHARA...
"I'M A SWORD-BEARER"?
THAT WAS REALLY NOT THE TIME. JUST LIE, YOU DORK.
TMP
TMP
SORRY I SAW
I PATCHED THINGS UP OVER THERE.
PEACEFULLY
WELL, I GUESS YOU'RE...
...NOT THE LYING TYPE, KOKONOE.
THE TRUTH IS, THAT'S HOW MOST PEOPLE SEE SWORDSMEN.
...AND, YEAH, IT'S DEPRESSING.
KOKONOE?
DID SHE FORGET WE SAVED HER OR SOMETHING?!
STILL, THEY DON'T HAVE TO LUMP US IN WITH THE RADICALS.
RIGHT, KOKONOE?!

FOR AN INSTANT...
...I WAS SO MAD I COULDN'T SEE STRAIGHT.
I LOOKED POSSESSED.
SHE BROUGHT UP..
...SEISHIRO ...
GLUMMM
WHOA! HE'S MORE BUMMED THAN I THOUGHT!
Why?!
!
ANYONE WOULD GET MAD IF THEY HEARD SOMEONE SLAMMING SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO THEM.
IT MADE ME MAD TOO.
YOU'RE NOT THE SAME.
IF SHE THINKS I'M THE SAME AS THE RADICALS...
...I CAN'T BLAME HER.
BESIDES, REMEMBER EARLIER?
TAKAHARA...
...THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS!
WE'RE NOTHING LIKE THE PEOPLE WHO THINK...

HAH
UNLIKE THE RADICALS, YOU CHOSE TO HELP OTHERS, RIGHT?!
THUDD
THUDD
YOU HAD THE CHANCE TO GET SOMETHING ABOUT SEISHIRO OUT OF THEM, BUT YOU TOLD ME TO DEAL WITH THEM INSTEAD!
I FEEL LIKE WE'RE ALREADY BEST BUDS!
BY THE WAY, I DID ASK, BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING
HE'S RIGHT!
CLEVER NEGOTIATOR
SOMETHING INSIDE ME HAS BEEN COMING UNDONE EVER SINCE I MET TAKAHARA.
AND...
HUH? KOKONOE?
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
THAT WAS CRUCIAL, AND I LEFT IT TO TAKAHARA.
Am I nuts?
WHEN DID I START CARING ABOUT ANYTHING OTHER THAN UNCOVERING THE TRUTH BEHIND SEISHIRO'S DEATH?
KOKONOE?
I'M...
...AFRAID OF THAT.

DA
NO!
H- HUH?! HEY!
FWSH
?
HUH? "NO" WHAT?
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO...
NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS.
I SWORE I'D SEE THIS THROUGH, EVEN IF IT KILLS ME.
THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME BUT SEISHIRO!
ARE YOU A WOLF WITH HIS FANGS RIPPED OUT?
I'LL UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT SEISHIRO WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS!
NO!
KOKONOE!
IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I'LL...!

I HOPE YOU CONTINUE TO SHINE, EVEN IF YOU MUST SACRIFICE SOMETHING.
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR AMBITION, SACRIFICES MUST BE MADE.
MY LITTLE BROTHER AND FATHER WERE KILLED BY A SWORD BEARER!
END
IN ORDER TO DO THAT...
...I'LL HAVE TO PUSH THROUGH, NO MATTER WHAT...
IS THAT REALLY WHAT IT MEANS?

Samurai Drive

SAMURAI DRIVE CHARACTER PROFILES - PART 5

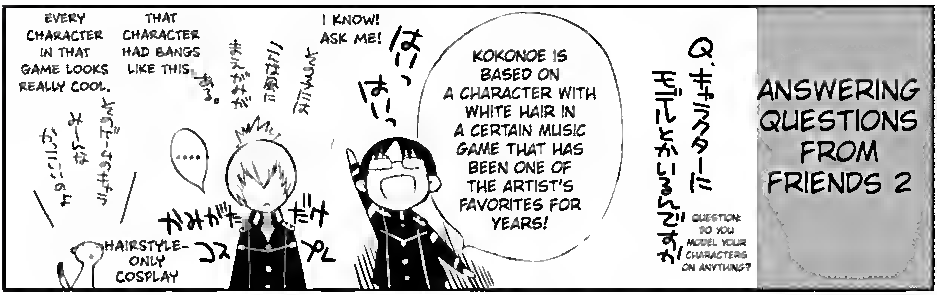
A RATHER STRANGE FELLOW WHOSE STANDARDS FOR LIFE ARE BASED IN BEAUTY. HE FEELS THAT BEAUTY LIES IN THINGS LIKE AMBITION AND DESPERATE EFFORTS, RATHER THAN IN APPEARANCE. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GOOD OR EVIL, AND THEY MEAN NOTHING TO HIM. HE IS ESPECIALLY DRAWN TO PEOPLE WHO POUR THEIR SOULS INTO SOMETHING OR RISK THEIR LIVES, AND TO WORKS ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE THAT. HE TREATS LIFE AS A SPECTATOR SPORT, SO HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO LOOK DOWN ON PEOPLE. HIS HOBBY IS ART APPRECIATION. HE IS INFATUATED WITH HARUMA'S AMBITION AND VIEWS HARUMA AS ONE OF HIS FAVORITES. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS CONVENIENT EYES DON'T SEE THINGS THAT HOLD NO VALUE FOR HIM.
A COMPLETE FIEND. THIS CHARACTER'S NAME IS ALSO BASED ON A PLACE NEAR THE AUTHOR'S HOMETOWN. IT'S A HOT SPRING.

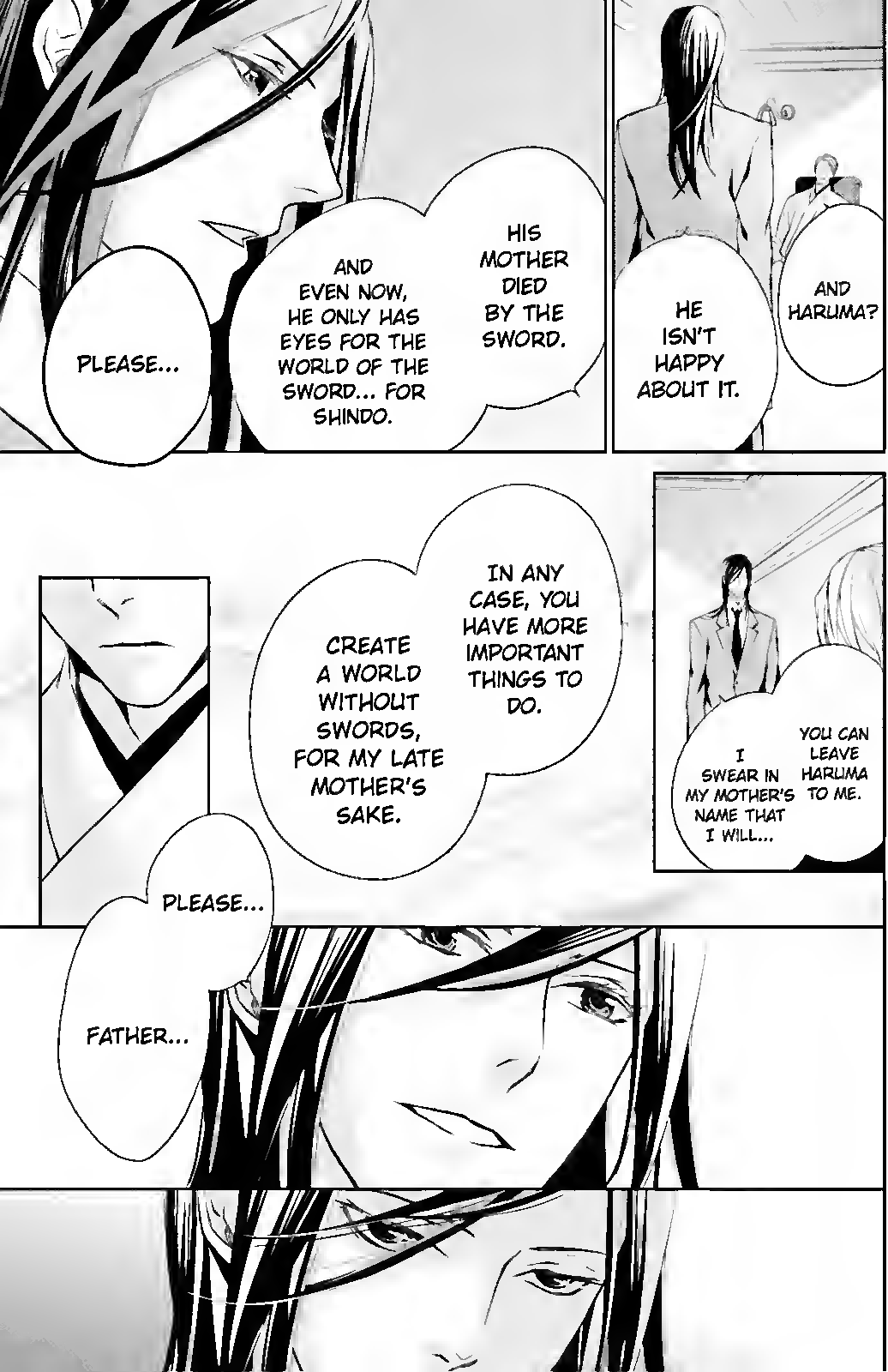
SENSYU SUGATANI

AGE: 16 10TH GRADE
HEIGHT: 177CM
ATTRIBUTES: AN ECCENTRIC AESTHETE.

#6: LONG DAY AT SHISEIKAN ~ MORNING

LATELY...
9:00 AM
THE KOKONOE MANSION
...HARUMA DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE CARRYING HIS SWORD.
...YOU, YUKINARI?
YES. I'M HOLDING ONTO IT.


ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS 2
Q. キャラクターにモデルはいるんですか？
QUESTION: DO YOU MODEL YOUR CHARACTERS ON ANYTHING?
KOKONOE IS BASED ON A CHARACTER WITH WHITE HAIR IN A CERTAIN MUSIC GAME THAT HAS BEEN ONE OF THE ARTIST'S FAVORITES FOR YEARS!
I KNOW! ASK ME!
EVERY CHARACTER IN THAT GAME LOOKS REALLY COOL.
THAT CHARACTER HAD BANGS LIKE THIS.
HAIRSTYLE-ONLY COSPLAY


AND HARUMA?
HE ISN'T HAPPY ABOUT IT.
HIS MOTHER DIED BY THE SWORD.
AND EVEN NOW, HE ONLY HAS EYES FOR THE WORLD OF THE SWORD... FOR SHINDO.
PLEASE...
YOU CAN LEAVE HARUMA TO ME.
I SWEAR IN MY MOTHER'S NAME THAT I WILL...
IN ANY CASE, YOU HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO.
CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT SWORDS, FOR MY LATE MOTHER'S SAKE.
PLEASE...
FATHER...

MY SWORD.
GIVE IT BACK.
MY KEEP-SAKE OF SEISHIRO.
IT'S EVERY-THING TO ME.
THOSE EYES HE TURNS ON ME...
PLEASE...
YUKINARI...
THEY'RE JUST LIKE...
JUST LIKE...

MASTER YUKINARI!
TOMOE... YOU AGAIN?
I WILL SAY IT AS OFTEN AS I MUST!
PLEASE RETURN...
...MASTER HARUMA'S SWORD!
....
I KNOW I AM BEING ARROGANT AND INTRUSIVE, BUT...
THAT SWORD IS EVERYTHING TO MASTER HARUMA.
THAT'S WHY I TOOK IT.
THEN WHY NOT DISPOSE OF IT?
WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO KEEP IT IN YOUR ROOM?

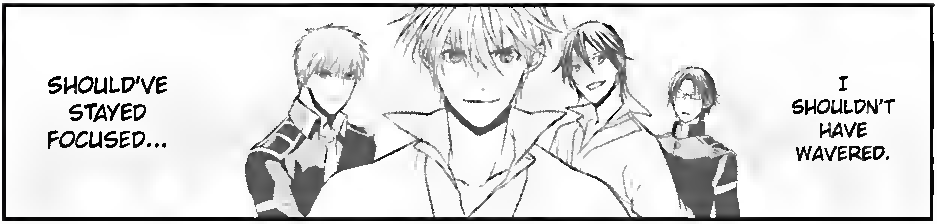
!
AN INTRUDER?!
HAH
MASTER YUKINARI! THE SWORD!
MASTER HARUMA'S SWORD IS GONE!

I ONLY NEED TO HAVE THEM FOCUSED ON ME.
EVERYTHING IS A TOOL. NO MORE, NO LESS.
HAVING HARUMA LOSE SIGHT OF SEISHIRO'S SHADOW WILL BE A FINE THING INDEED.
THAT'S RIGHT. THOSE EYES...
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SWORD.
MASTER YUKINARI?!
LET THEM HAVE IT.
DEET DEET DEET
MASTER HARUMA!
...!

BOOM
9:40 AM
(END OF 1ST PERIOD)
SHISEIKAN HIGH SCHOOL.
FROM: KASUGA
SUBJECT: A NOTICE
PLEASE EXCUSE THE ABRUPT MESSAGE.
IT APPEARS THAT MASTER HARUMA'S SWORD HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM MASTER YUKINARI.
YOURS IN HASTE.
TOMOE
NEW MESSAGE
DATE: 09/XX/2010
FROM: KASUGA
SUBJECT: A NOTICE
PLEASE EXCUSE THE ABRUPT MESSAGE
IT APPEARS THAT MASTER HARUMA'S SWORD HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM MASTER YUKINARI.
WHAT...?
PSST
WHAT'S UP?
WHAT'S WRONG?
WHAT DO WE DO?! WHAT DO WE DO?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SAY WHAT?!
DWAH
IT APPEARS THAT MASTER HARUMA'S SWORD HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM MASTER YUKINARI.

THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING.
WHAT AM I GOING TO TELL SEISHIRO?!

WHY DIDN'T I DO EVERY-THING I COULD TO TAKE BACK THE SWORD?
WHY DID I LET IT BE TAKEN IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IF I HADN'T WAVERED... IF I'D JUST STAYED FOCUSED...
I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MY EYES FIXED ON SEISHIRO AND JUST KEPT GOING.


SHOULD'VE STAYED FOCUSED...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE WAVERED.

I SHOULD HAVE GIVEN IT...
...EVERYTHING I HAD...

BAM
KOKONOE!
LET'S GET IT BACK! YOU AND ME!

...NO. I CAN'T.
WHA... WHAT KIND OF A FACE IS THAT?!
?!
YOU KNOW I'M A HUGE SEISHIRO FAN TOO! THAT'S HIS SWORD THEY TOOK!
I TOTALLY KNOW HOW YOU FEEL!
I CAN'T JUST SIT HERE!
DON'T WAVER. STAY FOCUSED.
NUH-UH
BUT IF WE COOPERATE AND LOOK FOR IT TOGETHER...
IT'S NOT TAKAHARA'S FAULT.
BUT...
LOOK, I KEEP TELLING YOU...
AT LEAST TRY TO COUNT ON YOUR FRIENDS AT TIMES LIKE THIS.
WE'RE COMRADES, REMEMBER...
What?!
NOT AGAIN! WHY?!
Denied!
WOULD IT KILL YOU TO ACCEPT HELP?!
HE'S NOT A BAD GUY, EITHER. HE'S ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN SEISHIRO.

SMACK
I WANT TO BE...
...ALONE.

HUH? NOT THIS AGAIN...
I'M FOCUSING ON SEISHIRO.
JUST HIM.
JUST LIKE BEFORE
IT DOESN'T WORK IF YOU'RE AROUND.
I WANT YOU TO LEAVE ME ALONE.
I CAN'T HAVE YOU CLOSE TO ME RIGHT NOW.
HEY...
JUST WHAT AM I...
...TO YOU?

I DON'T KNOW...
... HUH.
KLUNK
I SEE.

NUH...
IBUKI'S BUDDY, MAKIO.
I DON'T GET IT EITHER.
CAN'T.
MAKKIE! Help!
HWOOOO
LOOK!
TOO SCARY TO GO NEAR!
KOKONOE IS JUST LIKE HE WAS BEFORE HE MET TAKAHARA!!
NOW THAT WAS EMBARRASSING TO EAVESDROP ON!
WAIT!
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM HERE!
WHAT WAS THAT?! "WHAT AM I" TO YOU?
A LOVERS' QUARREL!
ALL RIGHT, KANEDA!
GO FIX THAT ATMOSPHERE!
WHUMP
NO WORRIES! YOU'RE THE DETECTIVE! YOU CAN DO IT!
THAT MAKES NO SENSE!

YAAY
OH, SCREW THIS!
HE...
COME TO THINK OF IT, ISN'T ATTENDENCE...
HEY GUYS!
...PRETTY THIN TODAY?!
EVEN AS THEY TALKED ABOUT IT...
HARUMA CAN'T HEAR ANY OF IT!
PSST
THAT'S WEIRD.
TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED.
PSST
PSST
ANOTHER EMPTY SEAT OVER THERE?
YEAH!
ACTUALLY...
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
WAIT, DURING THE MORNING CEREMONY, EVERYONE WAS THERE.
R-R-RIGHT?! RIGHT?!
THANK GOODNESS!
WE'RE NORMAL!
3RD PERIOD
2ND PERIOD

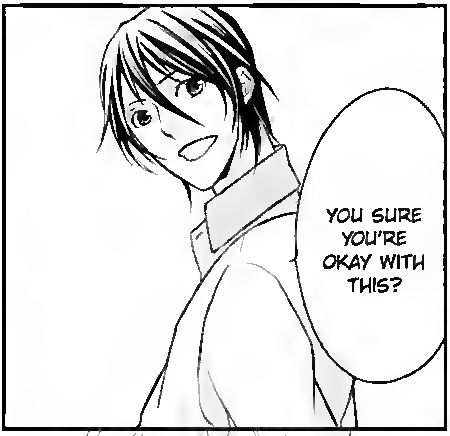
GRRRK
12:40 PM
(START OF LUNCH BREAK)
NRGGGGH
WHAT'S GOING ON?
YES?
HELLO?
BEEP
BOING
DEET DEET
AND WHY "DETECTIVES"? IT'S JUST YOU
DOES NOT.
THE HAJIME KANEDA DETECTIVES!
THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR...
ARE EVEN HALF OF US HERE?
...!
REALLY ...!
HUH?
YEAH? WHO'RE YOU?
UH HUH
OH. AND?

OKAY. I GOT IT.
LATER.
BEEP
WHAT'S GOING ON?
MAKI. REN.
I'M GOING OUT FOR A SEC.
HUH?
WE'LL GO WITH YOU.
I NEED TO BUY LUNCH.
NOPE. I'M GOING ALONE.
FWSSH
?
SEE YA.
....
WHAK
HEY.
KOKONOE.

I'M GOING TO DO THINGS MY WAY TOO.
YOU'D BETTER NOT WHINE ABOUT IT.
YERK?!
RMMBLE
KLAK
....
...?
...I MADE HIM MAD.
BUT...
...NOW THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING TO DISTRACT ME AGAIN.
JUST LIKE BEFORE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN TAKAHARA LIKE THAT...
GRRR!
GRRR!
"He's scary!
WHAT'S WITH THAT GUY? HOW DARE HE SAY THAT TO HARUMA!

KOKONOE! LISTEN UP!
KO...
WHEW
NOW I CAN FOCUS
ON SEISHIRO.
KEEP THAT UP AND YOU'LL LOSE ALL YOUR FRIENDS!
I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED, BUT I DO KNOW THIS!
NOBODY CARES ABOUT YOU MORE THAN TAKAHARA DOES!
GIVE THE GUY A BREAK, ALL RIGHT?!
...OOPS.
KATAKUKA, YOU'RE SHAKING
NO! I'M SAYING THIS!
SCREWED UP ALL HIS COURAGE.
THEIR BUSINESS. NOT YOURS.
DON'T.

YEEK
He...
HE'S BACK TO KOKONOE 1.0!
He's got them crazy eyes!
TRAUMATIZED FROM GETTING BEAT UP.
AHHHH
OH MAN...
....
HOW RUDE!


YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS?

...BUT SERIOUSLY.

誰
...IT'S OKAY...
MY TOP PRIORITY...
IS SEISHIRO.
JUST HIM.
ABOUT ME, OKAY?
DON'T FORGET ...
DON'T LET 'EM GET TO YOU!
GRAB
BUT...
IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T KNOW THAT.
TAKAHARA CARES ABOUT YOU...!
KINDNESS...
PHEW
....
FWIIIISH
SHISEIKAN, OLD AUDITORIUM

BAMM
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
....
WHAT A SURPRISE.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, IBUKI TAKAHARA.
I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D REALLY COME ALONE.
"FOOLS RUSH IN," I SUPPOSE.

HA HA. THANKS.
SHUT THE HELL UP.
GIVE ME THAT THING YOU MENTIONED.
OH? THEN YOU ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS?
YEAH. WHAT WAS YOUR NAME AGAIN? SUGATANI? YOU CALLED AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.
REALLY...
PERFECT TIMING...
DID I? THEN ACT HAPPIER.
YOU HAVE A DEEP RESPECT FOR SEISHIRO SHINDO TOO.
YOU SHOULD BE ALL OVER THIS CHANCE LIKE ANTS ON SUGAR.
TRUE...
Hate that comparison, though!

CONGRATULATIONS.
NOW THIS TREASURE WILL BELONG TO YOU ALONE.
THE ENVY OF ALL SWORD FANATICS.
KEEPSAKE OF SEISHIRO SHINDO. THE CELEBRATED BLADE "KOUYA."

HAH
KOKONOE!
...NOE.
...E.
I'M IN CLASS...?
OH, CRA...
TEACH-ER?
AGH
GRRRRR
KRCCK
WAAAAH
WHEN I GOT HERE TO TEACH 6TH PERIOD...
I FOCUSED..
...TOO HARD AND ZONED OUT?
VWIP
VWIP
LOOK AT THIS!
GLOMP
WAAH
?!
KOKONOE! WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THIS CLASS?!

GREEEK
I'M TEACHING A CLASS...
OF ONE!
I'VE NEVER BEEN SO HUMILIATED IN MY LIFE!
WAAAH
I'M GOING HOME! CONSIDER THIS STUDY HALL!
...?
LOOK! I TOLD YOU...
KRKK
IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU TRIED TO PICK UP THAT GIRL!
I DID NOT!
YARGH
THAT STUFF LOOKED HEAVY. I JUST HELPED HER CARRY IT!
YEAH, THAT'S CALLED A PICK-UP!
YARGH
BESIDES, WE DIDN'T GET OUR LUNCH BECAUSE SOMEBODY DROPPED THE STUFF ALL OVER THE PLACE AND WE HAD TO PICK IT ALL UP!
A POOR LI'L STRAY DOG CUT IN FRONT OF ME AND I HAD TO DODGE! GOT A PROBLEM?!

WAS THAT AN "I DON'T KNOW"?
...SUPER-NATURAL MASS KIDNAPPING?
OR NOT.
BRING ME A TRANS-LATOR.
BZZZZZ
BZZZZZ
DWAH! KOKONOE?!
Just you?!
HUH? WHERE IS EVERYBODY?
...HECK, WHERE'S THE TEACHER?
UH-UH
...SOOOO...
THAT'S WHY WE'RE LATE! SORRY!
Bow
IT'S TAKAHARA!
BZZZZZ
INCOMING VIDEO CALL
CALLING
IBUKI TAKAHARA
BZZZZZ
!
GO ON. ANSWER IT.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PICK UP?
?
....
BZZZZZ
BZZZZZ

HAVE
NO CALLS.
友だちいないのかな…
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER A VIDEO CALL?
HUH? OH.
....
HERE.
はい
THERE YOU GO.
どーぞ
THANK YOU.
ありがとう
BRRIP
BINK
HI...
...HARUMA KOKONOE.
BINK
?!
HUH?
WHO'S THAT?
SENSYU SUGATANI?

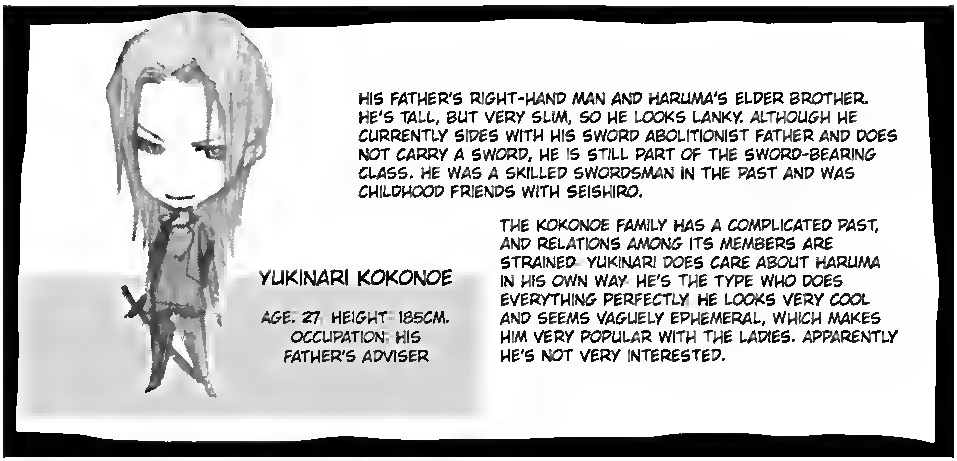
OH? THAT'S A MUCH BETTER FACE THAN THE ONE YOU WORE LAST TIME.
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
KOUYA!
WHY...
...DO YOU HAVE THAT?!
KEEP THAT FACE...
...AND COME TO THE OLD AUDITORIUM.
I EXPECT...
...YOU ALREADY KNOW...
...WHAT I WANT.

TAKAHARA!

....
BEEP
BEEP
BLIPP
BRRR
BRRR
DID THE LONE WOLF REGAIN HIS FANGS?
CLATTER
HE...
HEY!
KOKONOE ?!
NO... THOSE WERE EVEN BETTER. THE EYES OF A FIERCE LION...
END

至誠館

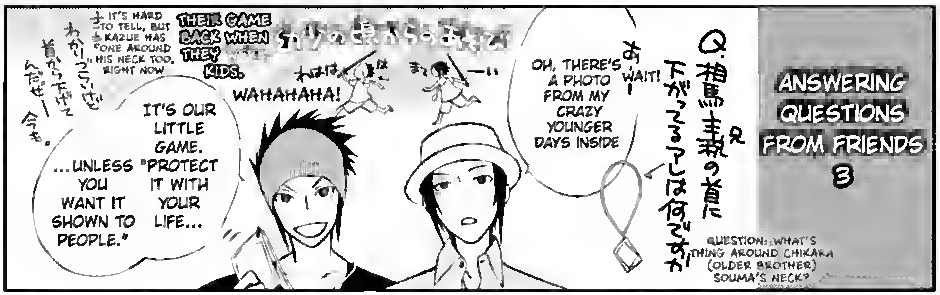
SHISEIKAN



SAMURAI DRIVE CHARACTER PROFILES PART 6

EPISODE #7: LONG DAY
AT SHISEIKAN ~ AFTERNOON

COME TO THE OLD AUDITORIUM.
I EXPECT...
...YOU ALREADY KNOW...
...WHAT I WANT.


ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS 3
Q. 相島一哉の首にかかっているアレはなんだ？
QUESTION: WHAT'S THING AROUND CHIKARA (OLDER BROTHER) SOUMA'S NECK?
WAIT!
OH, THERE'S A PHOTO FROM MY CRAZY YOUNGER DAYS INSIDE
THEIR GAME BACK WHEN THEY WERE KIDS.
WAHAHAHA!
IT'S OUR LITTLE GAME. "PROTECT IT WITH YOUR LIFE... ...UNLESS YOU WANT IT SHOWN TO PEOPLE."
IT'S HARD TO TELL, BUT KAZUE HAS FOXIE AROUND HIS NECK TOO, RIGHT NOW.

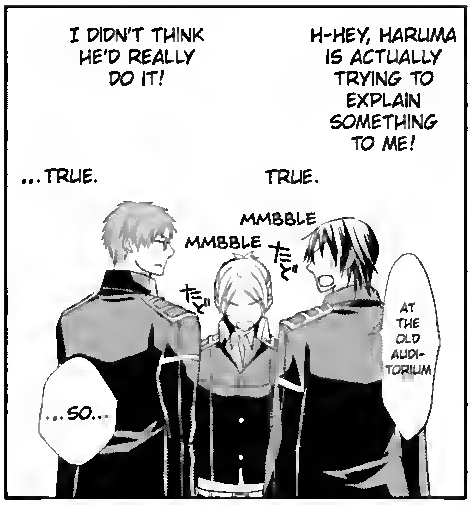
I SMELL DANGER!
EW
YOU MEAN THE NOTORIOUS TOTAL WEIRDO?!
WASN'T THAT SUGATANI FROM CLASS 3?
HEY, KATAKURA. DID YOU SEE THAT?
SO WHAT'S HE DOING WITH A BEATEN-UP TAKAHARA, MAKI?!
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE 'EM!
DA
HEY, KOKONOE! THINK. ARE YOU GOING IN THERE UNARMED?
WE'LL GO WITH YOU...
DA
HE...
HEY!
KOKONOE ?!

至旧講堂
TO OLD AUDITORIUM
ダッシュ
DASH!
逆走
WRONG WAY
UHHHHHHH, WHY?!
真剣
DEAD SET
HEY, KOKONOE! WRONG WAY! OVER HERE!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO THE OLD AUDITORIUM ?!
KOKONOE!

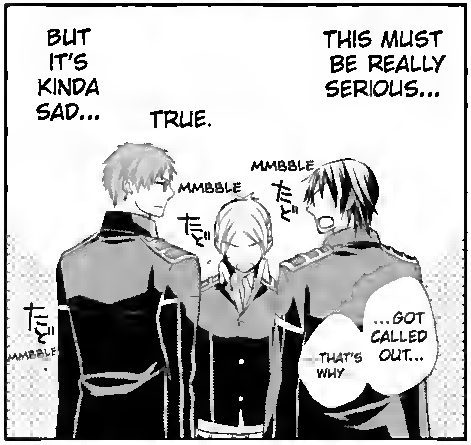
CLASS 2-1
BAM
HUFF
はあっ
HUFF
はあっ
HIDEHITO...
キャ
AHH
SIR...
KOKONOE? WHY SO FRANTIC?
WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE YEAR 2 CLASS-ROOMS?
IF YOU WANT JIN, I'LL GO GET...
A SWORD!
LEND ME...
...A SWORD.

HUH?!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
A SWORD?
WHY HIDEHITO?
HAAARUUUMAAA, COME ON!
JIN!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO ASK YOUR FELLOW DISCIPLE FIRST. THAT'D BE ME.
Don't hold back, now!
WOW! IT'S JIN!
キャー仁さんっ
HOLD BACK?
赤面?
HUGE FAN
超ファン
YOU NEVER ASK FOR PEOPLE FOR FAVORS!
AND YOU WANT TO BORROW A SWORD? SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE.
WELL, YOU CAME ALL THE WAY OVER HERE.
LET'S SIT DOWN AND TALK ABOUT IT. THEN WE'LL...
THERE'S NO TIME!
BAH
GKH!

...HUH.
ERRK
....
I NEED IT...
...RIGHT NOW!
BUT LISTEN. HARUMA? WHEN YOU ASK FOR FAVORS, YOU HAVE TO ASK *POLITELY* AND EXPLAIN *WHY*.
...THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.
....
...IS GOING TO CUT IT.
YOU CAN'T THINK BEHAVIOR LIKE THAT...
SO THE FACT THAT YOU'RE STILL ASKING FOR IT MEANS...
I'M SURE YOU'RE WELL AWARE OF THAT, HARUMA.
A SWORDSMAN'S SWORD IS HIS SOUL. IT ISN'T SOMETHING TO BE LENT LIGHTLY.


I DIDN'T THINK HE'D REALLY DO IT!
H-HEY, HARUMA IS ACTUALLY TRYING TO EXPLAIN SOMETHING TO ME!
...TRUE.
TRUE.
MMBBLE
MMBBLE
AT THE OLD AUDI-TORIUM
...SO...

MY SWORD...
...AND TAKAHARA...
MUH...


BUT IT'S KINDA SAD...
TRUE.
THIS MUST BE REALLY SERIOUS...
MMBBLE
MMBBLE
MMBBLE
...GOT CALLED OUT...
THAT'S WHY

...ARE...
!

....
UGH...
RRGH

...TRUE.
...MAKES ZERO SENSE.
THIS EXPLANATION...

NUH...
...NEVER MIND!
VWIP
DA
I'M GOING!
DON'T GIVE UP! HEY!
I'M DONE!
I CAN'T...
!
HEY, HARUMA!
...DO IT WELL.
KOKONOE, WAIT!
YOU'RE STILL UNARMED ...
UH...
HEY!
HANG ON A SEC.
YANK

AHHH
J-JIN?!
?!
SAYIN' IT AGAIN: HUGE FAN.
SORRY. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON?
HARUMA SURE COULDN'T.
OF COURSE!
SEE...

TAKAHARA WAS THERE, TOO, ALL BEAT UP.
...AND HE'S USING IT AS BAIT, TO CALL HIM OUT.
THIS SENSYU SUGATANI GUY HAS KOKONOE'S SWORD FOR SOME REASON...
AFTER HE SAW THAT, KOKONOE JUST RAN OFF.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, HIDEHITO?
IF IT'S ABOUT SEISHIRO'S SWORD, OF COURSE HARUMA'S DESPERATE.
YES.
BUT HE SAID...
...IT WAS ABOUT THE SWORD AND TAKAHARA.
HEH!
I'VE NEVER SEEN HARUMA PUT SOMETHING ON THE SAME LEVEL AS SEISHIRO!

C'MON!
OUR BOYS ARE GROWING UP! WE'VE GOTTA GO SEE THIS!!
I BET HE DOESN'T KNOW IT YET...
...BUT I'M SURE HE'S STARTING TO CHANGE.
STILL, I DON'T LIKE THIS OPPONENT OR THE SITUATION.
I HAVE HEARD ABOUT HIM EVEN HE IS JUST A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT.
HMM...
SO IT'S A FIGHT TO DETERMINE THE STRONGEST FRESHMAN?
YEAH, THAT SOUNDS BAD.
HE'S FAMOUS FOR DOING ANYTHING TO SATISFY HIS SENSE OF AESTHETICS, AND HE'S QUITE SKILLED WITH A SWORD.
FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, HE'S KOKONOE'S EQUAL. PERHAPS EVEN STRONGER...
WELL!
IF HE WANTS TO BEAT HARUMA, TRYING WHILE HE'S UNARMED IS A GREAT IDEA!
BWA HA HA HA
JIN...
A FELLOW DISCIPLE REALLY SHOULDN'T SAY THAT...
TMP

A FESTIVAL...
...TO DETERMINE THE STRONGEST FRESHMAN?

SUGATANI!
SUGATANI!
SENSYU SUGATANI!
BAM
2:30 PM

THERE HE IS!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
HARUMA KOKONOE... WAIT. HUH...?
?!
WHAT...
WHAT'S WITH THE CROWD?!
YOU GUYS... YOU'RE FROM CLASS 2, 3... EVEN 4?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
TH...
...THAT'S OUR LINE...

WHY ISN'T KOKONOE ALONE?
!
HI, HARUMA KOKONOE.
SKREEK
SENSYU SUGATANI!
WHERE ARE YOU?
I KNEW YOU'D BE DESPERATE. THOSE ARE TERRIFIC EYES.
THOSE EYES...
...I'LL BE WATCHING THEM FROM UP HERE.

SUGATANI! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CALLED US ALL HERE! WHAT'S WITH THE "MAGGOTS" BUSINESS?!
THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS, YOU PEASANTS.
PEAS.. ants
A GROUP ATTACK ON A SINGLE PERSON IS AN UGLY THING. MY SENSE OF AESTHETICS FORBIDS IT.
HOLD IT!
IF YOU WANT TO TAKE KOUYA BACK, GET THROUGH THEM.
THEY'RE A BUNCH OF WORTHLESS MAGGOTS THAT WANT TO FIGHT YOU BUT WERE AFRAID TO DO IT ALONE.
TAKE CARE OF WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU FIRST.
I SIMPLY...
HMMM
...TALKED TO MYSELF. LOUDLY.
I WANT TO BE THE STRONGEST FRESHMAN.
AND EVERY OTHER FRESHMAN
YEAH.
YOU.
MAN, I WANT TO BE KING OF THE HILL.
I WANT TO BEAT KOKONOE.
SHUF
HARUMA KOKONOE IS CURRENTLY UNARMED. IF YOU WANT TO BEAT HIM, NOW'S THE TIME.
SHUF SHUF SHUF
I MIGHT JUST CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LOWLIFES WHO WANT TO CLAW THEIR WAY UP..
FOLLOW ME!
WHOA! COUNT ME IN!
RE...LLY?
WHAT?

BE GRATEFUL. I GAVE YOU A CHANCE TO FIGHT AGAINST KOKONOE AT AN ADVANTAGE.
...ALTHOUGH I SEEM TO HAVE MISSED TWO OF YOU.
HUH?
I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYONE WHO FOLLOWED ME AFTER THEY OVERHEARD ME TALKING TO MYSELF.
HE'S HORRIBLE!
I HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT USING PAWNS I OBTAINED BY ACCIDENT.
...BUT.
Rejoice.
WHAT A BASTARD!
I COLLECTED ALL OF KOKONOE'S CLASS 1 ALLIES BEFOREHAND, SO THEY WOULDN'T INTERFERE.
WHERE ARE THEY ALL GOING?
HUH?
OUR CLASS?
HAH
HMPH
WELL, THEY'RE SMALL FRY. I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THEM.
....
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!

HEY!
NOT US!
HUH?!
SO YOU GUYS WERE BEHIND THAT SPIRITING AWAY THING!
ALL I HAD TO DO WAS MAKE UP AN EXCUSE AND THEY ALL CAME OUT HERE.
LOTS OF THEM WERE FUNNY.
HA HA HA
CLASS 1 IS FULL OF INNOCENT IDIOTS, SO IT WAS EASY.
THERE WAS ONE WITH BLACK HAIR AND GLASSES THAT FLEW HERE WHEN I HINTED THAT THERE WAS A CRIME IN PROGRESS.
...KANEDA
YEAH, IT'S KANEDA
WHAT?!
THAT IDIOT EMBARRASSING OUR WHOLE CLASS
THERE WAS ONE STRANGE BLOND KID. I OFFERED HIM THE SWORD, BUT...
...HE CORRECTED ME, SAYING HE WAS "TAKING IT BACK HIMSELF."
TAKAHARA ?!
?!

I'M GOING TO DO THINGS MY WAY TOO.
I THOUGHT HE WAS MAD...
...BUT HE WASN'T...
...WHY?!
TAKAHARA SAID...
HE'D "TAKE IT BACK"?
BLINK
...DID HE JUST CHANGE?
WELL...
KLICK
...I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW NOW.
BECAUSE...
WHRR

...NO ONE IN CLASS 1 CAN STRING A SENTENCE TOGETHER AT THIS POINT.
!!
TAKAHARA!
HE'S NOT THERE...
...NOW, THEN. SHOW ME, HARUMA KOKONOE.
STRUGGLE TOWARDS ONE GOAL, WITH NOTHING TO BIND YOU.

SNAPP
SNIKK
HOW DARE YOU DO THAT...
WHY YOU!
...TO OUR CLASS!
YARRGH

WE'LL HANDLE THESE GUYS!
KOKONOE!
GET YOUR SWORD BACK!
GO!
SUGATANI!
SUGATANI!
NO TIME...
I HAVE TO...
YANK
KSSH
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST IGNORE US?!
HEY!
SUGATANI!
WHERE IS HE?!

WHAT'S WITH THEM?!
...TAKE IT BACK!
IT'S LIKE ATTACKING A BRICK WALL!
HIS TWO SECONDS ARE STRONG TOO! WHAT A GYP!
WHUD
WE CAN WIN...
BUT HEY, WE OUTNUMBER THEM!
BEAT HARUMA KOKONOE! THE STRONGEST FRESHMAN!
I THINK WE CAN WIN THIS!
LOOK! THEY'RE BLACK AND BLUE ALL OVER!

I WANT TO...
...GET TO HIM ASAP...
SUGATANI...
...WHERE ARE YOU?
I'LL TAKE IT BACK!
I'LL TAKE IT BACK.
TAKE BACK MY KOUYA.
GET...
...OUT OF MY WAY!
SEISHIRO'S KEEPSAKE!
TAKAHARA...
WE WILL FIND THE TRUTH.
IS IT BECAUSE WE BOTH...
...RESPECT SEISHIRO?
I'M GOING TO DO THINGS MY WAY.
WHY DID I JUST THINK OF...
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS, LET ME HELP.

ALL THREE OF YOU CAN DIE TOGETHER!
KSSH
IBUKI!
KOUYA!
BECAUSE WE'RE COMRADES.
OR IS IT FOR ME?
SEISHIRO...
TAKA...
HARA
KOUYA...
...?

BECAUSE WE'RE COMRADES.
KOUYA!
OR IS IT FOR ME?
SEISHIRO...
TAKA...
—HARA
KOUYA...
...?

ALL THREE OF YOU CAN DIE TOGETHER!
KSSH
IBUKI!

YANK
WHOA!
GAAAAH!
W-WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?!
WHAM
WHIZZ
TOO SLOW.
SNIKK
HEH
TAP

KRAK
WHUD
AWW...
WHAT WAS *THAT*? BOOORING.
I CAME BECAUSE I HEARD THERE WAS A PARTY HERE. THIS ALL YOU GOT?
NOW NOW. DON'T BE HASTY. WE ONLY HAVE ONE GOAL HERE.

HARUMA KOKONOE. STRONGEST OF THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS
GET OUT HERE.
WE'RE CRASHING THIS FUN LITTLE PARTY.

GET OUT HERE.
WE'RE CRASHING THIS FUN LITTLE PARTY.

HARUMA KOKONOE. STRONGEST OF THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

WHAT'S GOING ON?!
TH...
...THE SOUMA BROTHERS?
TSURUGIBE TOO?
...?

THOSE GUYS...
...ARE ALL SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS.
WHY...?
WHY ARE THE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS HERE?!
AND THEY'RE ALL SHISEIKAN'S TOP SWORDSMEN TOO...
WHY?!

WHY?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
WE'RE HERE...
...TO HAVE FUN.
END

SAMURAI DRIVE

SAMURAI DRIVE CHARACTER PROFILES - PART 7

CLASS 1-1 CLASSMATES

MAKIO SHIINA | REN KATAKURA | HAJIME KANEDA

WHEN THEY FIRST APPEARED, I HAD NO IDEA THEY'D TURN INTO SEMI-REGULAR CHARACTERS, SO THERE'S NOTHING DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THEIR LOOKS. NOW THEY'RE A SOLID PART OF THE CLASS 1-1 CREW.

MAKI HAS HUGE RESPECT FOR JIN, SO HE SECRETLY COPIES HIS HAIRSTYLE. ALTHOUGH HE GOOFS AROUND WITH HIS BUDDIES, HE'S ALWAYS TAKING A STEP BACK AND LOOKING AT THINGS OBJECTIVELY. HE'S A TOUCH MORE MATURE THAN THE REST OF THE GUYS.

AS PEOPLE WHO READ KANJI CHARACTERS MAY HAVE GUESSED FROM HIS NAME, WHEN REN FALLS IN LOVE, IT TENDS TO BE UNREQUITED. HE HAS NO LUCK WITH GIRLS, WHICH REALLY BOTHERS HIM. REN ALSO SOUNDS LIKE A GIRL'S NAME IN JAPANESE, AND HE DOESN'T LIKE IT ALL THAT MUCH; HE THINKS IT DOESN'T MATCH HIM.

AS KANEDA'S NAME SHOWS, HE'S A FAMOUS DETECTIVE (OR THINKS HE IS). EVERYONE LOVES MESSING WITH HIM.

#8 LONG DAY AT SHISEIKAN ~ NIGHT

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
...TO HAVE FUN?
YOU'RE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS ...
ARE YOU BUTTING IN ON OUR BUSINESS?!
TAPP
WHA...

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS 4
QUESTION DON'T YOU THINK THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY STRONG PEOPLE AT SHISEIKAN?
IT'S JUST A FANTASTIC YEAR FOR FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES. SHEER COINCIDENCE!
THEY CALL US THE ONE-IN-A-CENTURY MIRACLE GENERATION.
HUH?
RIGHT?!

FWMMP
...BUT THESE GUYS NEED TO LEARN SOME MANNERS, KAZUE.
MY BAD.
NO...
CHIKARA...
WHOK
THIS IS HOW SHISEIKAN FRESHMEAT SHOULD BE.
YEAH. THEY'RE DEFINITELY WORTH SCHOOLING.
BRRRR
KIT
CHIKARA... KAZUE...
....
THE SOUMA BROTHERS ...
THEY'RE CALLED THE "DEMON TWINS."
WHEN THESE TWO DRAW THEIR SWORDS, THE ONLY SOUND LEFT IS SCREAMING.

UKYO TSURUGIBE, THE BLACK-SMITH.
YOU'RE SCARING EVERYONE.
YOUR EYES LOOK DEAD SERIOUS.
KAZUE CHIKARA ...
BESIDES ...
チラ PEEK
EVEN THIS PERSON ...
SERIOUS? NAH. THIS SMILE IS TOTALLY GENUINE.
KEH HEH HEH
HE HAS A KIND FACE ...
...BUT THEY SAY THE SWORDS HE FORGES ...
...CAN SEVER ANY-THING IN THE WORLD.
AND THESE OTHER GUYS ...
...NEVER MIND THAT.
WHICH OF YOU IS HARUMA KOKONOE?
THEY'RE ALL TOP-RANKING SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS

KOKONOE!
SHUFF
...JUMPED US NOW...
IF GUYS LIKE THEM ...
....
SO YOU'RE HARUMA KOKONOE?
THIS IS HILARIOUS!
TUMP
THIS CUTE LITTLE GUY IS THE STRONGEST FRESHMAN?
HA HA HA!
HEY. THAT'S RUDE.
NOOGIE
?!
NOOGIE
?
LOOK, KAZUE! HE'S TINY! HE'S SKINNY!
NOOGIE

IT'S A SHISEIKAN TRADITION.
WE'RE JUST OBSERV-ING.
HUHN?
DON'T SELL US SHORT, FRESHIES.
WE'RE NOT HERE TO HELP ANYONE.
YOU SUCK!
HAH
KOKONOE! YOU CALLED IN BACKUP?!
GRAH
...SAID THE POT TO THE KETTLE.
HOW COULD YOU ASK THE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS FOR HELP, YOU COWARD?!
HA HA HA!
SHISEIKAN TRADITIONAL
WE'RE WATCH-ING!
MAKE IT GOOD, FRESH-MEN!
...HAZING...
BESIDES...
HOW COULD WE MISS THAT?
THIS FUN LITTLE PARTY WILL DETERMINE WHO'S TOP DOG IN YOUR GRADE.
TMP
!
...SOMETHING'S GONNA HAPPEN TO HARUMA KOKONOE, THE STRONGEST FIRST-YEAR STUDENT."
THERE'S ONLY ONE GUY SHISEIKAN SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS CALL "BOSS."
BOSS...
...OUR BOSS KEEPS...
TELLING US...

RIGHT?
JIN?
THE DEMON LORD.
JIN SAITO!
THE RULER OF THESE TOUGH GUYS. THE MAN AT THE SUMMIT OF SHISEIKAN. THE BOSS OF ALL GRADES, NOT JUST HIS OWN.
THAT'S RIGHT. TODAY'S THE DAY HARUMA KOKONOE WAKES UP.

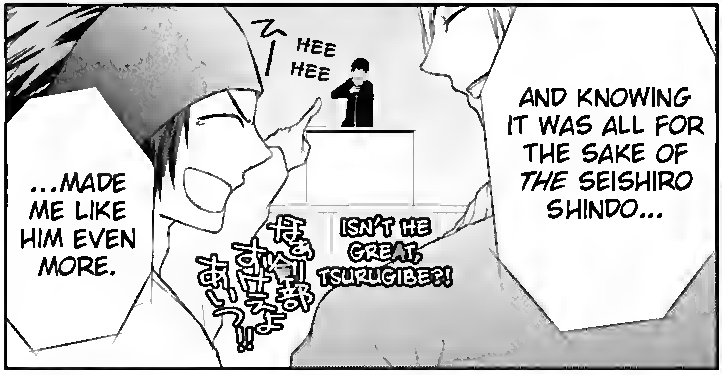
HE'D BETTER.
THUD
HEY.
AH...
WAIT...
NO!
SENSYU...
...SUGATANI!

FWMMP
WAIT!
YOU'RE AT FAULT TOO, HARUMA KOKONOE. HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO STAGNATE?
....
WHICH ONE?
GIVE IT BACK!
WHA ...?
HE TOOK THEM ALL OUT?!
I DIDN'T EXPECT MUCH FROM THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE...
I GUESS IT WAS...
...TOO MUCH FOR THESE IMBECILES TO HANDLE.
THEY DIDN'T PROVOKE EVEN A HINT OF HARUMA KOKONOE'S LIGHT.

SO FAR, YOU'RE MAKING NO SENSE WHATSOEVER!
AND YOU HURT OUR CLASSMATES!
HEY, JERK!
WHY DO YOU HESITATE?!
HARUMA KOKONOE!
WHY YOU...!
BA-DUMP
IRK
YOU STILL DON'T KNOW? YOU MUST BE SOFT IN THE HEAD.
WHY YOU...!
HUH?!
?!
WHAT?!
HAH! I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
TROMP
WHAT DO YOU WANT, ANYWAY?!
...WHAT DO I WANT?
...HIGHEST GOAL. MY ONLY GOAL.
IT IS...
TROMP
THIS...
...IS MY...
TROMP
TROMP

BA
...TO WITNESS THE INNER BRILLIANCE OF HUMANS AND BRAND IT INTO MY MEMORY!
THAT IS MY LIFE'S WORK!
BAM
HUSSSSSH
I DON'T GET IT!
WA HA HA
DUDE!! WHOA!
ARE ALL THIS YEAR'S FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS THAT FUNNY?!
PERISH THE THOUGHT. DON'T LUMP ME IN WITH HIM.
IS HE NUTS...?
I LOVE BEAUTIFUL THINGS.
HE'S STILL GOING...
DO YOU KNOW WHEN HUMANS ARE MOST BEAUTIFUL?
WHEN THEY SINGLE-MINDEDLY FIGHT FOR WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN.

HE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.


HEE HEE
ISN'T HE GREAT, TSURUGIBE?!
...MADE ME LIKE HIM EVEN MORE.
AND KNOWING IT WAS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE SEISHIRO SHINDO...

THE FIRST TIME I SAW HARUMA KOKONOE I WAS STUNNED.

WATCH-ING HIM WAS SU-PREME BLISS.
BUT...

HARUMA KOKONOE...
...SHONE BRIL-LIANTLY, BODY AND SOUL.

EVEN IF THE WHOLE WORLD TREATS HIM COLDLY...
...HE POURS ALL HE HAS INTO FIGHTING FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES IN.

BUT THEN HARUMA KOKONOE BEGAN TO WAVER.
THE SOURCE OF THE BLIGHT WAS THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM.
HE WAS CONFUSED BY THE UNNECESSARY VOICES.
HE COULDN'T FOCUS. NATURALLY, HIS BRILLIANCE GREW TARNISHED.
DEFILING BEAUTY IS A MORTAL SIN!
THEREFORE, I WILL PURGE YOU ALL!
WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH YOU, YOU'LL NEVER GO NEAR KOKONOE AGAIN!
THIS IS ALL TO RETURN HARUMA KOKONOE TO HIS ALOOF STATE AND RESTORE HIS BRILLIANCE.
HE'S JUST TALKING OUT OF HIS...
STOP IT! SERIOUSLY! JUST STOP!
HEE HEE
YEAH!
WOW.
THESE FRESHMEN ARE AWESOME!
....
HEY, KOKONOE, YOU CAN GET MAD NOW.

THE STAGE HAS BEEN SET.
COME AND GET IT.
KOUYA!
KOKONOE WON'T GO BACK TO BEING A LONER.
HE'S RIGHT.
IF YOU DECIDE TO SHINE ONCE MORE...
WSSH
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED.
I WANTED TO BE ALONE.
THE FINAL, MISSING FRAGMENT OF THE LONE SWORDSMAN.
...I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANTED MOST.
IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO YOUR FORMER SELF.
THE LONE WOLF.
TCH...
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANT AS WELL?

...WILL YOU, KOKONOE?
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, I'M WAY STUBBORN.
TMMP
YOU CAN BEAT ME. HE CAN REJECT ME.
BUT I'LL NEVER GIVE UP.
KOFF
TUMP
IBUKI!
I WON'T LEAVE HIM ALONE.
I'M HARUMA KOKONOE'S COMRADE. GOT IT?
GRRT

TOTTER
KOFF
IBUKI!
GRR
WHUD
HOLD YOUR TONGUE, SINNER!
YOU ARE THE ROOT OF THIS EVIL, IBUKI TAKAHARA!
KLAKK
...IS RIGHT HERE!
...YOUR WHOLE WORLD ...
WHAT YOU WANT MOST RIGHT NOW...
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, HARUMA KOKONOE?!

MAKE YOUR CHOICE.
DON'T DISAPPOINT ME, HARUMA KOKONOE.
WILL YOU CHOOSE THE SWORD, THE SYMBOL OF YOUR DEVOTION TO SEISHIRO?
OR...
...THIS CREATURE THAT IS NOTHING BUT A SHACKLE...
...SOMETHING THAT DULLS YOUR BRILLIANCE?
WHICH ONE...
...WILL YOU CHOOSE?

SEISHIRO IS EVERYTHING TO ME.
THAT'S NO CHOICE ...
AT ALL
...I FELT ALMOST SICK.
WHEN I SAW THAT...
BUT THEN...
WHY...?
WHICH ONE...?
WHY...?
...AM I HESITATING...
...AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
BA-DUMP

I FELT LIKE I WAS BETRAYING SEISHIRO.
HE WAS EVERYTHING TO ME.
WHAT IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING IMPORTANT BECAUSE YOUR PRIDE GOT IN THE WAY?
GRRT
DID I JUST NOT WANT TO ADMIT IT?
BUT IBUKI TAKAHARA ...
...IS ALREADY A SOLID PART OF ME.

...BOTH OF THEM!
I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE...
...A SINGLE THING FROM ME! NEVER AGAIN!
WHAT?
IN THAT CASE...
I WON'T HESITATE!
...I WON'T CHOOSE.
I'M RETAKING...

...BOTH OF THEM!
WHAT?
IN THAT CASE...
I WON'T HESI-TATE!
...I WON'T CHOOSE.
I'M RETAKING...

I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE...
...A SINGLE THING FROM ME! NEVER AGAIN!

HARUMA KOKONOE'S COLOR HAS CHANGED...
GULP
BEAUTIFUL.
BRIGHTER?
HE'S SHINING
THAT BRILLIANCE...
I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
SNIKK
IF YOU WANT KOUYA BACK...
I WANT TO FEEL IT FIRST-HAND!
SHING
...COME AND TAKE IT BY FORCE.

HARUMA!
WHIRR
I'LL LEND YOU "KOUKI."
NOW I CAN LEND IT TO YOU.
GO TAKE BACK BOTH OF 'EM!
....
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME THAT.
IT'S NONE...
GRRT
...OF YOUR BUSINESS!

WHAT?!
DID KOKONOE JUST LOSE ON IMPACT?!
AW, C'MON! WHAT A TOTAL LETDOWN!
SO THAT "STRONGEST" STUFF WAS JUST A RUMOR?
KARRANG
NO.
THAT'S NOT IT.

HARUMA CHOSE THIS STRATEGY AFTER GAUGING SENSYU'S STRENGTH.
THE GUY HONED HIS TALENT FIGHTING IN THE STREETS AS THE WHITE DAEMON.
IT'S INSTINCT.
AN INSTANT WIN?!
DON'T DISAPPOINT ME, HARUMA KOKONOE.
I DON'T CARE WHO WINS OR LOSES.
I ONLY WANTED...
...TO SAVOR THIS BLISS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, AND YET...
WHAT A PITY...
SKRRK
WHRR
THIS ISN'T...
...A GAME.
PSYCH.
CRACK
WE'RE DONE!
!
I'M THROUGH PLAYING YOUR GAMES...

RRRRRIP
TMP
RIPP
HAH
REVERSE GRIP? WHAT...?!
SHUNK

BOTH KOUYA AND IBUKI.
TUPP
I'M TAKING THEM BACK.
A DETER-MINED GAZE.
...TRY TO TAKE THEM FROM ME AGAIN.
DON'T YOU EVER...
THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU HARUMA KOKONOE.
BEAUTI-FUL.
HEH
A NEW BRILLIANCE.
KLATTER

YEAAAH!
FINALLY.
YES.
HE FINALLY...
...WOKE UP...
...TO WHAT'S IMPORTANT.

....
UH...
AHEM
WELL...
SO, UM.
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY
HUH?!
THANK YOU.
SORRY AND GRATEFUL.
YOU WERE MAD AT ME AND YOU STILL ...
...WENT TO TAKE THE SWORD BACK.
FOR SEI-SHIRO ...
...AND FOR ME...

SO!
ONE MORE TIME!
GRAH
WHAT AM I TO YOU?!
I KNOW YOU.
ONCE YOU GET AN IDEA INTO YOUR HEAD, YOU WON'T LISTEN TO ANYBODY.
...SO IT WAS ANNOYING, BUT...
...I HAD TO LET MY ACTIONS DO THE TALKING FOR ME.
TAPP
NO.
STOP.
ENOUGH.
JUST SHUT UP!
I'M A FRIEND, RIGHT?!
A FRIEND?
UH-HUH
OKAY...

...BUT DISSOLVED INTO THE NIGHT SKY...
...LEAVING BEHIND A NEW GLIMMER...
...AND STRENGTH-ENING THEIR BONDS.
THE AUTUMN STORM BROUGHT CHAOS...
DON'T YOU EVER FORGET THAT!
9:00 PM.
LONG DAY AT SHISEIKAN.
END

...BUT DISSOLVED INTO THE NIGHT SKY...
...LEAVING BEHIND A NEW GLIMMER...
...AND STRENGTH-ENING THEIR BONDS.
THE AUTUMN STORM BROUGHT CHAOS...
DON'T YOU EVER FORGET THAT!
9:00 PM.
LONG DAY AT SHISEIKAN.
END

Samurai Drive

SAMURAI DRIVE CHARACTER PROFILES - PART 8

SOUMA BROTHERS
OLDER BROTHER: CHIKARA
YOUNGER BROTHER: KAZUE

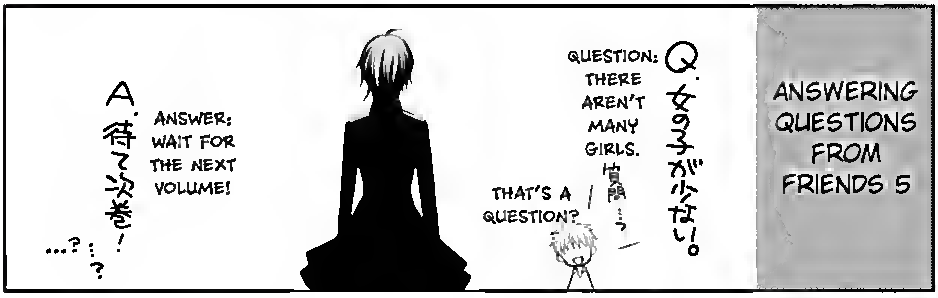
SOPHOMORES (11TH GRADE). TWINS, AND FRIENDS WITH JIN. ALTHOUGH PEOPLE TELL THEM THAT THEIR FACES ARE IDENTICAL BUT THEIR PERSONALITIES ARE COMPLETE OPPOSITES, THEY'RE REALLY NOT THAT DIFFERENT (APPARENTLY). THE CONFIDENT AND POWERFUL ONE IS THE OLDER BROTHER, CHIKARA, BUT RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE YOUNGER BROTHER, KAZUE, IS MUCH MORE DANGEROUS WHEN HE SNAPS.

THESE TWO CHARACTERS WERE THE RESULT OF A STRONG REQUEST FROM MY EDITOR.

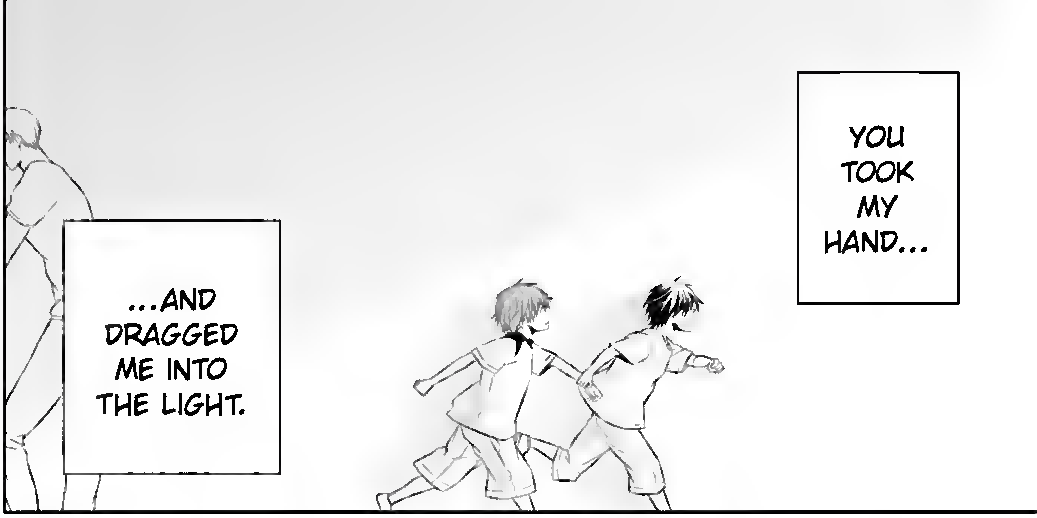
I RARELY COME UP WITH CHARACTERS THAT WEAR HATS, SO IT'S ALL VERY NEW TO ME.

#8.5 (ANOTHER STORY): HIS BACK

EVEN IF WE ARE GRADUALLY REDUCED TO THE SHELL OF OUR OLD WORLD...
EVEN THEN, IN THIS PLACE...

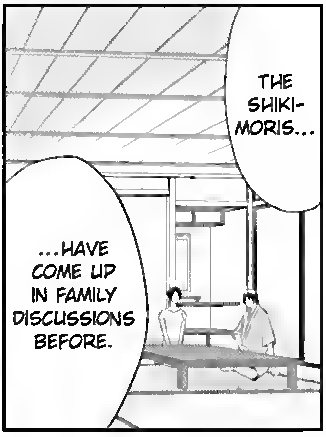

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDS 5
Q. 女の子が少ない。
QUESTION: THERE AREN'T MANY GIRLS.
質問!?
THAT'S A QUESTION?
A. 待て次巻!
ANSWER: WAIT FOR THE NEXT VOLUME!
...?

GRAB HIM!
DROP THE SWORD!
I'LL KILL THEM!
STOP! LET ME GO!
WHEN I TEETERED ON THE BRINK OF A DEEP, DARK ABYSS...
IN THAT INSTANT...
OUR EYES MET.

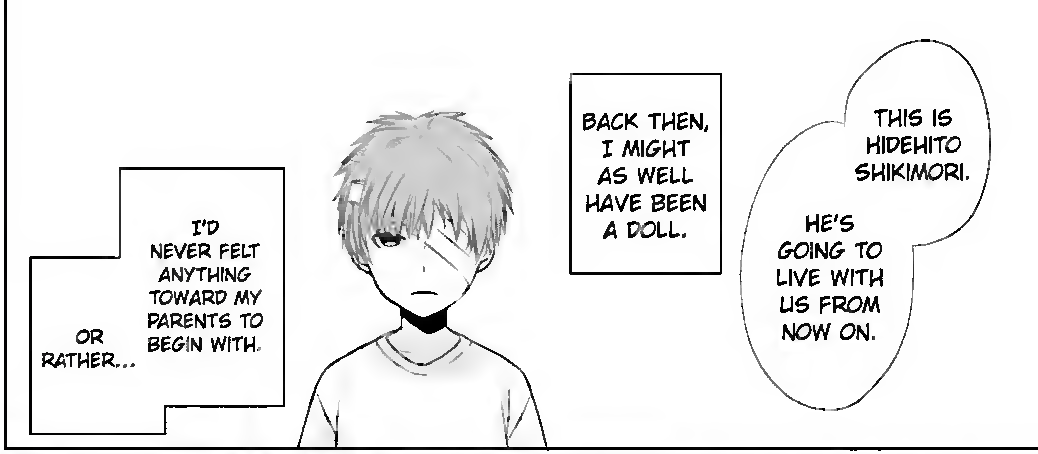

YOU TOOK MY HAND...
...AND DRAGGED ME INTO THE LIGHT.

THAT BOY'S NAME IS HIDEHITO SHIKIMORI.
HIS FAMILY HAS TIES TO THE SAITO FAMILY. THEY ARE ALSO PART OF THE SWORD-BEARING CLASS.

WE WERE TAKING THINGS SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY, AND WE UNDER-ESTIMATED THE SITUATION.
IN THE END, THE WORST HAPPENED.

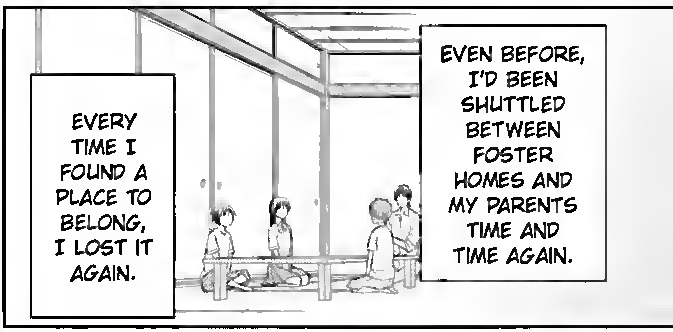

THE SHIKI-MORIS...
...HAVE COME UP IN FAMILY DISCUSSIONS BEFORE.

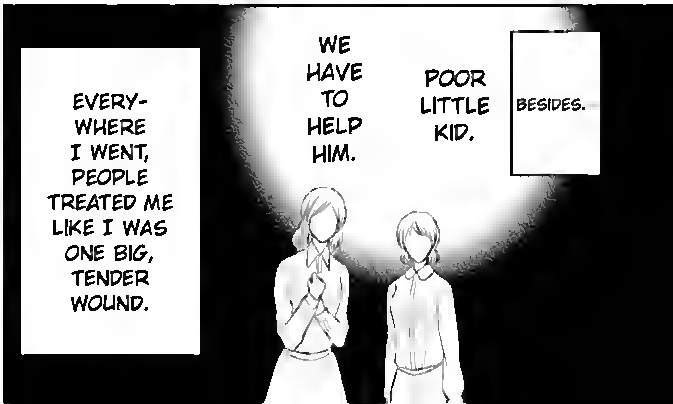
A 10-YEAR-OLD SAW HIS MOTHER CUT DOWN BEFORE HIS EYES AND HIS FATHER ARRESTED. ALL THE BLAME LIES WITH ME.
DEAR...
...AND? HOW IS HIDEHITO DOING?
WELL...
...HE REFUSES TO GO THERE.
KNAYY
I GOT A ROOM READY FOR HIM, BUT...
WELL, I'LL BE.
HE'S SLEEPING WELL, THOUGH.
YOU'D ALMOST THINK NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.
I WAS YOUNG, BUT...
...IT WAS MY WAY OF DRAWING A LINE BETWEEN "THEN" AND "NOW."


I'D NEVER FELT ANYTHING TOWARD MY PARENTS TO BEGIN WITH.
OR RATHER...
BACK THEN, I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN A DOLL.
THIS IS HIDEHITO SHIKIMORI.
HE'S GOING TO LIVE WITH US FROM NOW ON.

LIVING BY THOSE PESSIMISTIC WORDS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THERE WAS.
SQEE
SQEE
JIN IS 10. JUST LIKE YOU, HIDEHITO.
...AND HER LITTLE BROTHER JIN.
HI!
THIS IS SHIN, OUR OLDEST..
...I THOUGHT, "THEY'LL BETRAY ME ANYWAY. DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING."

...AND MADE ME EVEN MORE RESERVED AND ALOOF.
THOUGH I WAS STILL YOUNG, IT HURT ME...
...THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME STAY.


EVERY TIME I FOUND A PLACE TO BELONG, I LOST IT AGAIN.
EVEN BEFORE, I'D BEEN SHUTTLED BETWEEN FOSTER HOMES AND MY PARENTS TIME AND TIME AGAIN.


EVERY-WHERE I WENT, PEOPLE TREATED ME LIKE I WAS ONE BIG, TENDER WOUND.
WE HAVE TO HELP HIM.
POOR LITTLE KID.
BESIDES.

NOT FOR MYSELF.
NOT FOR OTHERS.
HUH? WHY?
I WAS SO EXCITED I COULDN'T SLEEP.
WHAT HAPPENED?
JIN, THOSE ARE SOME INCREDIBLE DARK CIRCLES.
I DIDN'T DREAM OR HOPE.
HEY, DAD! IS HE STAYING WITH US FOREVER?!
THAT'S RIGHT.
BOING
WHAT I FELT BACK THEN WAS...
HE'S STILL FRAGILE, JIN!
HEY! NO! SHH!!
YESTERDAY WAS GREAT! HIS DAD HAD HIM AT SWORDPOINT AND HE DIDN'T EVEN BLINK!
I GOT SO MUCH I WANT TO ASK HIM!
....
...NOTHING.
NOTHING AT ALL.
HIDEHITO!
NICE TO MEETCHA.
BAMM
RISE AND SHINE, HIDEHITO!
BUT...

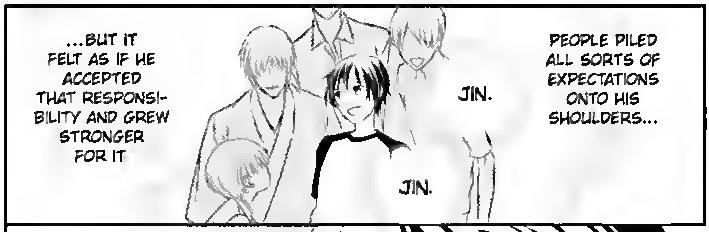
SWSSH
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY OUT THERE!
HAH?
THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM! HURRY AND GET READY, THEN COME TO THE MAIN HOUSE FOR BREAKFAST!
FOOOOOM
?!
?
UH-HUH
GREAT!
...YOU CAN HANDLE SCHOOL?
DO YOU THINK...
HOW'S YOUR MOOD?
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, PHYSICALLY?
FWIPP
OKAY, JIN. TAKE CARE OF HIDEHITO, YOU HEAR?!
SEE YOU LATER!
GOOD BOY!
BEAM

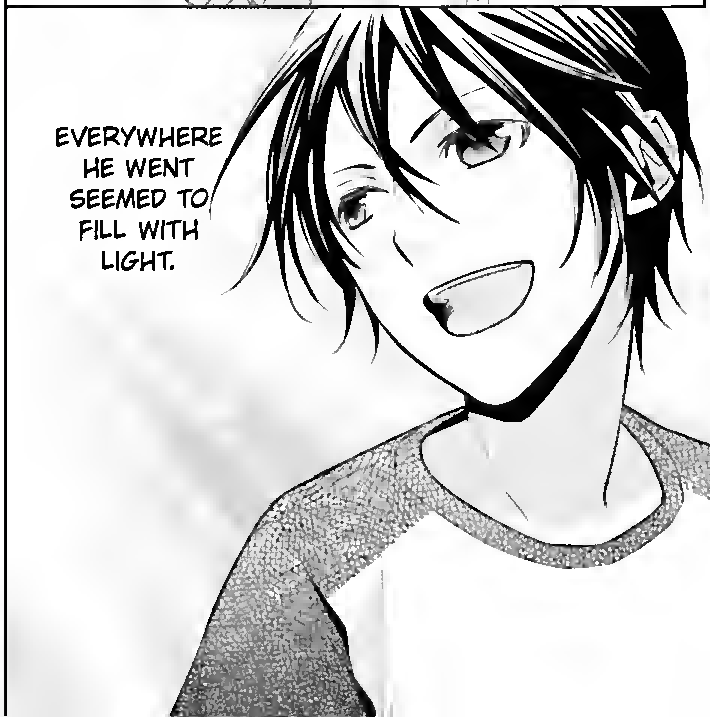
THE SAITO FAMILY DIDN'T HOLD BACK AT ALL.
....
MOM'S SCARY, HUH.
DAAAZE
I'VE BEEN HERE FOR A WEEK.
AT ALL THE OTHER PLACES...
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH. I'M SURE YOU'RE EXHAUSTED.
DO ANYTHING YOU LIKE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. DON'T PUSH YOURSELF.
...THEY'D SAY STUFF LIKE THAT, SOUNDING TROUBLED...
AND THEN THEY'D LEAVE ME ALONE.
I'D NEVER BEEN YELLED AT...
...OR COMPLI-MENTED BEFORE...
I BRAG ABOUT 'EM ALL THE TIME.
IF YOU DO ANYTHING BAD AT OUR PLACE...
...YOU'LL GET SMACKED, SO BE CAREFUL.
OH, AND...
BUT THEY'RE A GREAT FAMILY.
HE SMILED WHEN HE SAID IT. HE SEEMED SO BRIGHT TO ME.

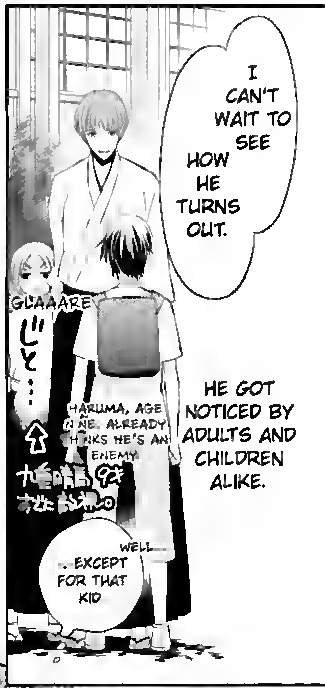
SHINDO DOJO
YES, MASTER SHINDO SAYS HE'S SKILLED.
THAT'S THE SAITO FAMILY'S SON.

PEOPLE WERE NATURALLY DRAWN TO HIM.

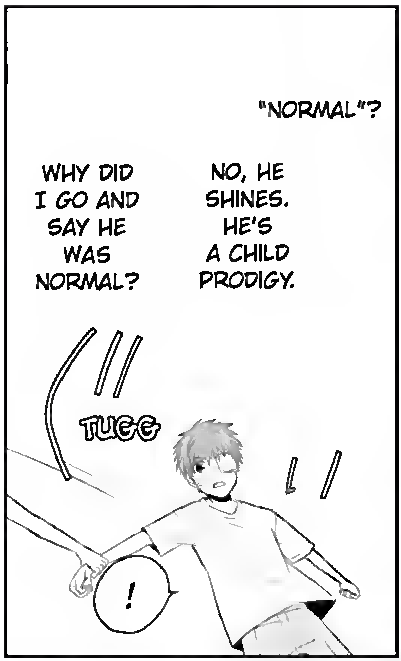
HE WAS WELL-BRED...
EVEN AMONG THE SWORD-BEARING CLASS, THE SAITO FAMILY IS A BIG NAME.
YEAH. BUT JIN'S A GREAT GUY.
...BUT HE WAS CHEERFUL, FRIENDLY, AND NEVER ARROGANT.
FRIENDS 友人たち。


...BUT IT FELT AS IF HE ACCEPTED THAT RESPONSI-BILITY AND GREW STRONGER FOR IT
JIN.
JIN.
PEOPLE PILED ALL SORTS OF EXPECTATIONS ONTO HIS SHOULDERS...

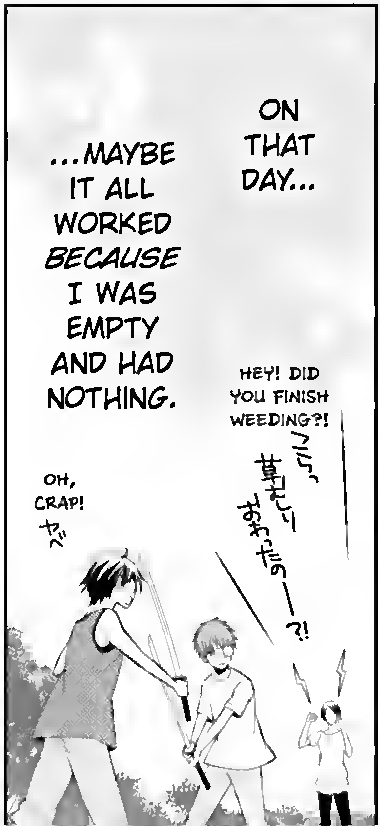

EVERYWHERE HE WENT SEEMED TO FILL WITH LIGHT.


I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HOW HE TURNS OUT.
GUAAARE
HARUMA, AGE ONE. ALREADY THINKS HE'S AN ENEMY
WELL... EXCEPT FOR THAT KID
HE GOT NOTICED BY ADULTS AND CHILDREN ALIKE.

BUT...
...DON'T YOU FEEL SUFFOCATED?
YOU CAN TELL? WHOA!
NOBODY'S EVER ASKED ME THAT BEFORE!
I'M SORRY.
YOU'RE FUNNY.
HEY, DON'T APOLOGIZE!
I LEARNED TO READ PEOPLE'S FACES
...IN THAT SERIES OF FOSTER HOMES
RIPP
WHY?
WELL...
...IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT A LOT GOING ON...
UNLIKE ME.
WEEDING ON DAD'S ORDERS
IT'S NOT QUITE SUFFOCATING, BUT...
...DID YOU KNOW THEY CALL ME A PRODIGY?
BUT I'M NOT. I'M JUST NORMAL.
I... I GUESS YOU ARE...
I mean, you weed and stuff.


"NORMAL"?
NO, HE SHINES. HE'S A CHILD PRODIGY.
WHY DID I GO AND SAY HE WAS NORMAL?
TUCC
!

BEAM
UH-OH


ON THAT DAY...
...MAYBE IT ALL WORKED *BECAUSE* I WAS EMPTY AND HAD NOTHING.
HEY! DID YOU FINISH WEEDING?!
OH, CRAP!

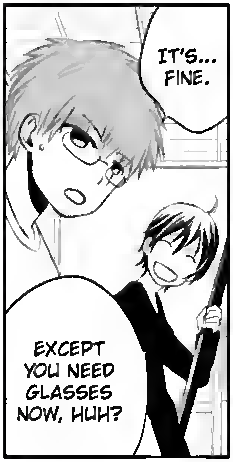
CLINK
PRACTICE WITH ME.
!
I WANT TO...
...SPAR WITH YOU, JUST FOR FUN!
HE HAD EVERYTHING.

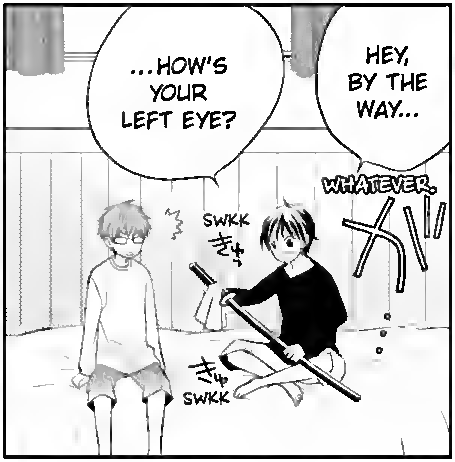
GAH
...THE BOY IS STILL LIVING IN THAT STORAGE SHED! WHY?!
...AND YET...
KNAYY
IT'S BEEN HALF A YEAR SINCE HIDEHITO CAME TO LIVE WITH US...
MOM, I'D BE OKAY WITH DONATING MY SNACKS FOR THAT.
WE COULD SCATTER SWEETS UP TO THE MAIN HOUSE, LURE HIM OUT, AND THEN...!
....
HAHは,
SHOULD WE SET A TRAP AND HAUL HIM IN HERE?!
IS IT TIME TO TRY THAT?!
MY MOM AND SISTER ARE GOING NUTS OVER IT.
HIDEHITO?
AFRAID?
HE'S AFRAID.
IT'S NOT WHAT HE "WANTS."
NO...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT? HE'S DOING WHAT HE WANTS.

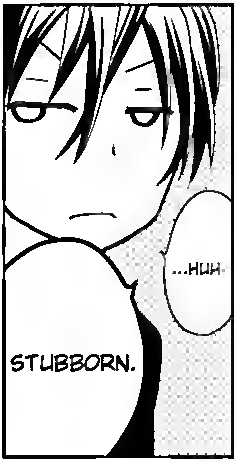
すかり子供たちの秘密基地的ほ。
Completely [illegible] into the kids' secret hideout.
....
SWKK きゃっ
きゃっ SWKK
C'MON AND MOVE TO THE MAIN HOUSE ALREADY.

IT'S TRUE.
THAT'S WHY I DON'T NEED IT.
...I'D HAVE TO BE READY TO LOSE IT SOMEDAY.
IF I GOT IT...

NO THANK YOU.
TALK ABOUT A LOUSY EXCUSE!
Nobody's like that!
BECAUSE "YOU DON'T LIKE BRIGHT, WARM PLACES"?!


IT'S... FINE.
EXCEPT YOU NEED GLASSES NOW, HUH?


...HOW'S YOUR LEFT EYE?
HEY, BY THE WAY...
WHATEVER.
SWKK きゃ
きゃ SWKK


...HUH
STUBBORN.

....
BACK THEN...
...WHEN I FIRST MET YOU...
...YOU'D GOTTEN SLASHED, BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN BLINK.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE AMAZING.
BUT...
...WHY DIDN'T YOU? WEREN'T YOU SCARED?

WHY?
BECAUSE I HAVE NO FEAR.
I WANT TO BECOME A STRONG SWORDS-MAN TOO!
YEAH, THAT! WHY?
HOW DO I TRAIN TO THINK LIKE THAT?
YOU HAVE TO...
...NOT CARE WHETHER YOU LIVE OR DIE.
KREEK
BACK THEN...
...HUH.
I SEE. IN OTHER WORDS ...
EVEN NOW...
SHUNK
BECAUSE...
...I'M EMPTY INSIDE...

...YOU WANT TO DIE?
WHIRR
AAAAH!
CLANG
NO!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
EWIP
HE'S SERIOUS!
BRRRR
HE'S...
SNIKK
BAH

?!
SKASSSH
WH...
WHY DIDN'T HE SWING HIS SWORD?
HEH HEH...
LOOK AT THAT.
YOU DO WANT TO LIVE.

I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
...I'D EVER THOUGHT THAT.
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME...
I STOPPED BEING TRULY EMPTY...
...A LONG TIME AGO...
HAH
TOTTER
!
THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR ATTACKING YOU.
OW...
I WANTED TO KNOW HOW YOU REALLY FELT.
I TOOK YOUR SWORD BLOW...
...BUT I WAS SCARED. I COULDN'T HAVE SWUNG BACK.
BACK THEN, YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO DODGE.

FWMMP
JIN!
OW
HEH
YOU'RE...
...AWESOME.
AFTER THAT...
SMAK
SMAK
...WE GOT SCOLDED LIKE THERE WAS NO TOMORROW.

...TO LOOK AFTER JIN IN THE MAIN HOUSE UNTIL HE WAS BETTER.
AS PUNISHMENT, THEY TOLD ME...
...JIN'S FEELINGS SAVED ME.
STILL...
NOT CARING IF YOU LIVE OR DIE IS GREAT IF YOU'RE A SWORDSMAN...
BUT IT'S A PRETTY SCARY THING BY ITSELF.
SHUPP
...COULD KILL HIM?
WHAT KIND OF PERSON PUTS ON AN ACT WHERE ONE WRONG STEP...
HE DID IT FOR ME...
HE RISKED HIS LIFE...
...TO TEACH ME WHAT I LEARNED.
I'LL GIVE HIM EVERY-THING I'VE GOT TOO...
I DECIDED THAT THE WINTER I WAS 10 YEARS OLD.

FOUR YEARS...
...LATER.
I THOUGHT HE'D STAY IN THE MAIN HOUSE, YOU KNOW?
I REALLY DID.
GRAH
WHY IS HE STILL LIVING IN THE STORAGE SHED?!
SO WHY?!

MAYBE WE SHOULD REALLY TRY THE TRAP!
WE'LL BAIT IT WITH GIRL'S UNDERWEAR, LEAVE A TRAIL TO THE MAIN HOUSE, THEN GRAB HIM WHEN HE COMES OUT FOR IT!
HE'S A TEENAGER! IT'LL WORK!
MOM, I WOULDN'T MIND PROVIDING THE BAIT.
....
IF HE STAYS THERE, HE WON'T BE POPULAR WITH GIRLS, NO MATTER HOW HANDSOME HE IS!
HE'LL STINK LIKE A STABLE!
MOM AND SIS HAVE NO CLASS...
UH, HEY...
Stink like a stable?

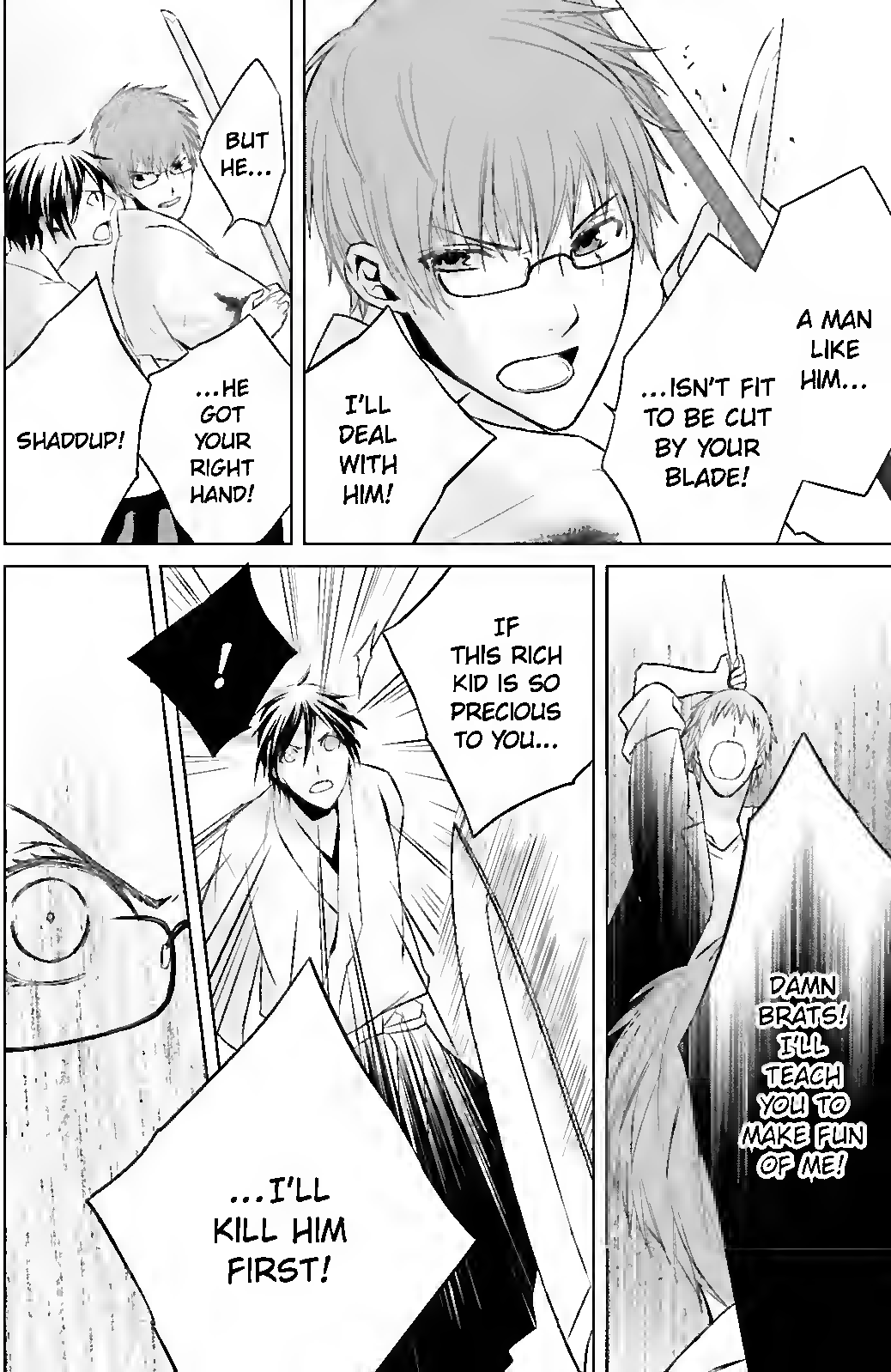
I'M SORRY.
THIS IS MY WAY OF ADAPTING.
WELL, I KNOW THAT.
STILL! IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOU CAN'T STAY THERE.
WHEN YOU GIVE UP, COME ON OUT OF THERE, ALL RIGHT?
PEACEFUL DAYS...
HA HA.
YOU'LL OUTGROW THE BED SOON.
....
STILL GROWING.
HAS LOST THE HEIGHT RACE.
HIDEHITO! LET'S GO TO SEISHIRO'S PLACE FOR SOME LESSONS.
HEY!
SMILES...
FAMILY, FRIENDS...
OVER THOSE FOUR YEARS, I ACQUIRED MANY THINGS I'D NEVER HAD BEFORE.
BY THAT TIME...
...JIN WAS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED AS A GENIUS SWORDSMAN.

SHINDO DOJO
PEOPLE CONSIDERED HIM TO BE THE SUCCESSOR OF OUR TEACHER...
...MASTER SWORDSMAN SEISHIRO SHINDO.
DON'T TALK LIKE IT'S JUST ME.
TAKING A BREAK.
YOU KEPT UP WITH ME DURING SEISHIRO'S LESSON.
YOU'D STAND OUT QUITE A BIT IF YOU QUIT HIDING BEHIND ME ALL THE TIME.
I'M...NOT DOING THIS FOR THE FAME.
I JUST WANT TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO HELP YOU.
...I GET THAT. ME NEITHER.
I JUST WANT TO GET STRONGER. THAT'S ALL.
STRENGTH, HUH?
BUT...
...I WONDER WHAT TRUE "UPRIGHT STRENGTH" IS...
....
AROUND THAT TIME...
...JIN BEGAN TO LOOK TROUBLED EVERY SO OFTEN.

HEY, HIDEHITO.
WHAT IF SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU GOT INVOLVED IN SOMETHING DANGEROUS ON PURPOSE? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
TERRORISM...
SHADY DEALINGS. ASSASSINATIONS
THE MANY ASSAULTS BY SWORD BEARERS. THE GROWING TREND OF SWORD ABOLITION. THE WAVES OF THE NEW ERA. THE PRIDE OF THE SAMURAI.
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT SEISHIRO?
IF SO, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T ANSWER RIGHT AWAY.
THE HORRIBLE DOWNWARD SPIRAL
YEAH, ME EITHER.
...AND YOU'RE RIGHT.
...SWALLOWS EVEN GOOD PEOPLE.
ONE OF YOUR VIRTUES IS THAT YOU NEVER SUGARCOAT THINGS.
BUT...
SHINDO DOSO
IF YOU MEANT YOURSELF, JIN...
...I'LL BE YOUR SHIELD NO MATTER WHAT.
I'LL PROTECT YOU.
SPLURT
NO.
THIS IS A PERSONAL DECISION ON MY PART.
BUT I...
HI... DEHITO
I'M NOT GONNA NEED THAT.
I'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES!
EXHAUSTED.

KLICK
HAAAAH...
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO STIFF.
CAN'T YOU FIX THAT?
I'M SORRY.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
ALL I'M SAYIN' IS, YOU COULD AT LEAST RELAX A BIT WHEN IT'S JUST US.
I REALLY MUSTN'T. ESPECIALLY NOT WITH YOU.
AT 14, MY EVERY-THING!...
I'D BE A DIFFERENT PERSON IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT DAY FOUR YEARS AGO.
EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE WANTED MY LIFE TO BE OF USE TO YOU.
....
AND YET...
...YOU NEVER SUGARCOAT THE STUFF YOU SAY...
I'M SORRY.
NO, IT'S A GOOD THING! DON'T CHANGE.
KRUNCH

...HIDEHITO.
HEY, KID. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
THUDD
ARENTCHA, SON?
...AND HERE YOU ARE, LIVIN' LARGE.
I'VE BEEN EATING PIGSWILL IN THE BIG HOUSE ALL THIS TIME...
BAH
WHAT?!
?!
STAY BACK!
HIDEHITO!
KLANG
YA HEAR?!
HOW DARE YOU FORGET WHO RAISED YOU! IT'S YOUR TURN TO SUFFER! DESPAIR AND DIE!


BUT HE...
...HE GOT YOUR RIGHT HAND!
SHADDUP!
I'LL DEAL WITH HIM!
...ISN'T FIT TO BE CUT BY YOUR BLADE!
A MAN LIKE HIM...
DAMN BRATS! I'LL TEACH YOU TO MAKE FUN OF ME!
IF THIS RICH KID IS SO PRECIOUS TO YOU...
!
...I'LL KILL HIM FIRST!

EVEN IF IT COSTS ME MY LIFE...
NO!
HE BROUGHT LIGHT INTO MY LIFE! DON'T TOUCH HIM!
HIDEHITO, STOP!
...I'LL KILL YOU!

SUBDUE HIM!
HURRY!
HIDEHITO...
YOU...
JIN!
?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

YOU JUST...
...THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T MIND DYING OVER THAT!
YOU TRIED TO DIE FOR ME! DIDN'T YOU?!
I...
OF COURSE I DID!
CUT THE CRAP!
YOU AREN'T MY SERVANT, AND I'M NOT YOUR MASTER!
BUT IF THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO DO IT, THEN HERE!
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE ORDER!

LIVE FOR ME!

...AND ANYWAY...
!
...IF YOU'RE DOING STUFF FOR ME...
...THINK ABOUT MY FEELINGS A BIT TOO...
THMMP
REMEMBER WHAT YOU KEEP TELLING ME?
WELL, I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU, EITHER.

NOT MANY PEOPLE GET ME IN THE BACK TWICE.
JUST YOU. BE PROUD OF THAT.
...AND DON'T EVER LET ANYONE TOUCH MY BACK AGAIN.
IN EXCHANGE...
...I'LL GUARD YOUR BACK.
...OKAY.
I SAW LIGHT.

A YEAR AND A HALF LATER...
THIS IS MY HOME TO DEFEND.
THE SEISHIRO SHINDO INCIDENT OCCURED.
SHADOWS FELL ON HUMAN HEARTS...
...THE FUTURE OF THE SWORD...
...EVEN ON THE BRIGHTEST OF LIGHTS.
EVEN IF WE ARE GRADUALLY REDUCED TO THE SHELL OF OUR OLD WORLD...
EVEN THEN, IN THIS PLACE...

LET LIGHT...
...AND BLESS-INGS...
...RAIN DOWN WITHOUT END...
END

THE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS (11TH GRADE)
THIS IS THE GUY WHOSE FACE WAS SHOWING JUST A LITTLE IN THE COLOR ILLUSTRATION AT THE BEGINNING OF VOLUME 1. HIS GRANDFATHER IS JAPANESE AND HIS GRANDMOTHER IS A FOREIGNER; HIS HALF-JAPANESE FATHER THEN MARRIED A FOREIGN WOMAN. HE IS JAPANESE, BUT HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT. HE COMES FROM A LONG LINE OF BLACKSMITHS, AND HE'S WORKING HARD TO CARRY ON THE FAMILY TRADITION. THAT SAID, BECAUSE OF THE INSULAR NATURE OF THE WORLD OF THE SWORD, HIS PEDIGREE AND APPEARANCE CAUSE LOTS OF UNPLEASANTNESS FOR HIM.

SAMURAI DRIVE CHARACTER PROFILES - PART 9

UKYO TSURUGIBE AND OTHER SOPHOMORES

PRINCE (TEMPORARY NAME). AS HIS NAME SUGGESTS, HE'S PRINCELY AND A TRUE GENTLEMAN. HE WANTS TO BECOME A NOBLE SWORDSMAN LIKE A PRINCE FROM A FAIRYTALE. AFTER MEETING TSURUGIBE AT SHISEIKAN, THOUGH, HE FELT HIS FACE WAS NO MATCH FOR TSURUGIBE'S ELEGANT, EXOTIC ONE. EVER SINCE, HE'S BEEN VERY ENVIOUS...

PONY TAIL (TEMPORARY NAME). TACITURN. OR RATHER, HE DOESN'T TALK AT ALL. HE'S VERY STOIC ABOUT EVERYTHING. HIS FAMILY'S ANCESTORS CAME FROM CHINA. HE ALWAYS LISTENS TO PRINCE'S WORRIES AND COMPLAINTS QUIETLY. WHAT A NICE GUY.

AFTERWORD
SAMURAI DRIVE VOLUME 2 MADE IT SAFELY INTO PRINT TOO.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
BUT WE'RE...
...ALL BEAT UP.
W-WHA?! WHO ARE YOU?!
THE WEASEL FAIRY. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
LIKE HECK YOU ARE!
OWWW!
HAH!
I'M JUST GLAD EVERYTHING WORKED OUT...
SIC 'EM, SHIROU.
SLUMP
SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE
SHIROU TELLS ME THAT...
...IN VOLUME 2 OF SAMURAI DRIVE...
SHE DIDN'T GET A SINGLE REAL APPEARANCE.
GREAT ANOTHER WEIRDO
THE HEAVENS TOOK PITY ON POOR SHIROU AND SENT ME AS A MESSENGER OF PEACE
...IT'S TRAGIC.
HEY, HOW DO WE GET HIM TO LEAVE?
AND DID YOU SEE PAGE 136, WHERE IT SAID...
"THERE ARE NO GIRLS"...?
SHIROU IS A GIRL!
SO IS YUKARI. SO IS KASUGA.
....

BOOM
GRAGH
YOUR SINS ARE GRAVE INDEED.
...AND THAT ISN'T ALL.
YOU SPENT TWO FULL VOLUMES...
...DOING NOTHING BUT BONDING! THAT'S IT!
THE STORY! HASN'T! PROGRESSED! AT ALL!!
YOU'RE TO BLAME, IBUKI TAKAHARA. IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU'RE HERE. IF YOU'D ONLY STARTED THE CHAPTER ENTITLED "HARUMA AND SHIRO'S THRILLING WHITE DAEMON TRIP! REVENGE SAGA."
WHAAT?
SHIRO WOULD GET PAGE-TIME, AND YOU'D ALREADY HAVE HAD YOUR REVENGE...
COME ON, NOW
I seriously doubt it
YOINK
IT WAS ALL NECESSARY TO HARUMA.
YOU KNOW HOW IMPORTANT...
...FRIENDS ARE, RIGHT?
...EXCUSE ME?! YOU'RE GUILTY TOO! DON'T TALK LIKE YOU KNOW!
WE'RE SORRY.
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE JUMPED IN
GRR
BOTH VOLUMES FEATURED SIDE STORIES WITH YOU AS THE MAIN CHARACTER! YOU'RE STALLING THE STORY!
HARUMA KOKONOE!
...
SQUEEZE
LISTEN TO ME.
VOLUME 3
VOLUME 3 IS CRUCIAL. I HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR IT. DON'T LET ME DOWN.

I'LL DO MY BEST.
?!
....
?
WHAT'S WRONG?
STAAARE
GOT IT?
BINK
School
?!!
ZZZZ SNUF
KOKONOE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SHIRO...
SORRY
SORRY ABOUT WHAT?!
?
HE STILL HAS ZERO COMMUNI-CATION SKILLS...
...BUT HE SEEMED HIGHLY MOTIVATED TO TAKE SOME NEW STEP.

SAMURAI DRIVE

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING VOLUME 2 ALL THE WAY TO THE END! I HOPE WE'LL MEET AGAIN IN VOLUME 3. PLEASE KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR IT.
I CAUSED EVEN MORE TROUBLE THIS TIME THAN I DID IN VOLUME 1, SO I'M SENDING EXTRA THANKS TO MY EDITOR, WAKABAYASHI. THANK YOU, DESIGNER FUJITA, FOR DOING MORE WONDERFUL DESIGN WORK ON VOLUME 2. I'M ALSO GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO IS PART OF SAMURAI DRIVE, TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN MY HOMETOWN AND THE KANTO REGION, AND TO EVERYONE WHO'S READING SAMURAI DRIVE.

AUTUMN 2010 -FUJIKO KOSUMI

THANKS
MY GODDESS
MAMESHIBA
AIRI
BLACK RABBIT
SAYAKA

SAMURAI DRIVE
Volume 2

KADDKAWA MANGA

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Fujiko Kosumi

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2-13-3 Fujimi Chiyoda-ku Tokyo, 102-8177 JAPAN

Translation/Labaamen, HC Language Solutions, Inc.
Lettering/HudsonYards Studio
Design/Nozomi Akashi
Editor/Eric Searleman